



PlayStation®2

PSP™
PlayStation Portable

PLAYSTATION 3

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

DECEMBER ISSUE 2009
100% Australian Content

18 PAGE REVIEW BONANZA!

- Borderlands
- Brütal Legend
- WWE 2010
- PES 2010
- DJ Hero
- Tekken 6
- Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2
- Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising
- and more!

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DEAD RISING 2

Kicking arse and taking brains!



PRINT POST APPROVED PP255003/06871

12

ISSUE 37 DECEMBER 2009
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CALL OF DUTY

MODERN WARFARE 2

Multiplayer madness: The hands-on verdict!

EXPOSED!

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

Exclusive producer interview,
new characters revealed!

EXCLUSIVE STUDIO VISIT!

GRAN TURISMO 5

Aussie cars confirmed, plus info you
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HANDS-ON!

ASSASSIN'S CREED II

It's all in the execution!



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Coarse language



PS3
PlayStation 3

PlayStation 2



XBOX 360

XBOX
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Wii



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GRAN TURISMO 5

The exclusive studio visit you can't afford to miss! Details you won't see anywhere else! Page 54

PlayStation®
Official Magazine - Australia

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The King of Iron Fist steps back in to the ring for another swing at the PlayStation fighting crown



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Is it the music genre's Next Big Thing or an uncool cousin to the venerable *Guitar Hero*?



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We get wild and freaky on Pandora with the shooter infused with flecks of RPG!



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You're in the right place if you want to wrestle Raw or lay the Smackdown



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Ryu Hyabusa is back in black, and this time he's brought three deadly friends with him



80 PES 2010

Can Konami's latest kickathon score a goal against the might of *FIFA*?



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It's the rock-hard sequel to one of the toughest shooters you'll ever play!



REVIEW 62 BRÜTAL LEGEND

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Girly men? Improbable storyline? Lush, spectacular graphics? It's another Square Enix masterpiece

37 QUANTUM

If aliens, lasers, bullets and a dash of all-out action excite you, check out this PlayStation exclusive, neo-futuristic shooter



22 WIN!

6x TRANSFORMERS 2 PRIZE PACKS!

9x NBA 2K10 PRIZE PACKS FEATURING SOME AWESOME SWAG!

5x AWESOME BORDERLANDS PRIZE PACKS WITH A TON OF GEAR!



Got an itch you just can't wait to scratch? Check our review!

DJ HERO 68

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COLLEGE



WELCOME!

I've already heard conversations that *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves* isn't all that. The only factor? Length. For some people it's still just too short. I say these people are missing the point. For instance, if I had 24 hours to kill I'd rather play *Uncharted 2* twice than another game double the length but half as interesting. Simple really.

How short is too short anyway? I think most of us can agree anything around the four-hour mark is taking the piss. That's just one of the reasons the *Terminator Salvation* game bit the big one. But what's wrong with eight to 10 hours of non-stop action? Is it a value thing? Back when we were young and mooching off our parents we just used to play games over and over again. You don't generally watch your favourite movies just once.

It must be a cost thing, because nobody ever has this discussion about films, or albums. If anything, films generally cop a serve for being *too long*. At 142 minutes, the recently-released *Funny People*, for instance, is a bit on the stretchy side. On the other hand, we don't hear anybody questioning the 35-minute run-time of Pearl Jam's latest album *Backspacer* either. If anything, the lean length makes for a far more punchy set. Nope, it's just games – which proves many gamers can never get too much of a good thing. Some of them probably just need to be more realistic about it.

Let me know if you disagree.

LUKE REILLY
EDITOR

PSN: Capt_Flashheart **PLAYING:** UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES
WANTING: GRAN TURISMO 5

OPS ON: LENGTH



STEPHANIE GOH

Holidays are always too short. It doesn't matter where you go or for how long, it takes about three days back at work before it feels like you never left.



PAUL TAYLOR

Games too short? I don't thinks so, but some sort of price vs. time invested graph would categorically settle this argument. It'd be worth squillions.



JAMES COTTEE

More than anything, LIFE is too short. There are too many great games, and not enough hours between now and the grave.



JAMES ELLIS

Games are just right for the average man. But I'm no average man: *Fallout 3*, done in three hours. *San Andreas* was a leisurely afternoon. *Final Fantasy*, all of them, a cakewalk.

PSN: TBA

Playing: Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2
Wanting: Dead Rising 2

PSN: paulgusta

Playing: DJ Hero
Wanting: Modern Warfare 2

PSN: DrWho3987

Playing: Borderlands
Wanting: Monster Hunter Freedom 3

PSN: gtfaster49

Playing: FIFA 10
Wanting: Brütal Legend

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12 TOP TEN
Fashion gets a critical eye as we go to the rack and look at hats.

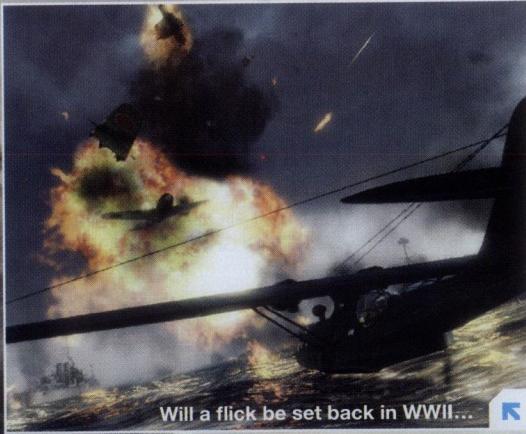
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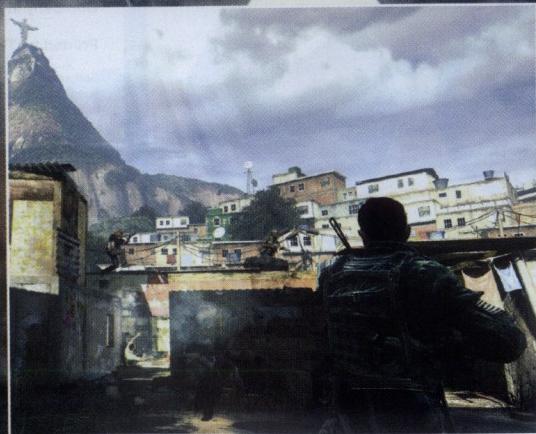
CALL OF DUTY MOVIE

Probably not starring Tom Hanks

Late last month, Activision, publisher of the *Call of Duty* games, filed to have the name 'Call of Duty' trademarked in the US, covering it for "pre-recorded movies featuring comedy, drama, action, adventure, music, theatrical performances and/or animation". Community Manager Robert Bowling also posted on his Twitter account, "First round of meetings in Paris wrapped. Grabbing lunch with Xavier Gens, director of the *Hitman* film while in town. Talking game films." All signs point to a massive production, though there's no word yet on a release date, who will star, or if there'll be Nazi zombies.



Will a flick be set back in WWII...



...or in the modern era?



14 WHERE TO NOW?
We glove up and give *King of Fighters* a dusting down



16 AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3
The events that shaped the games.



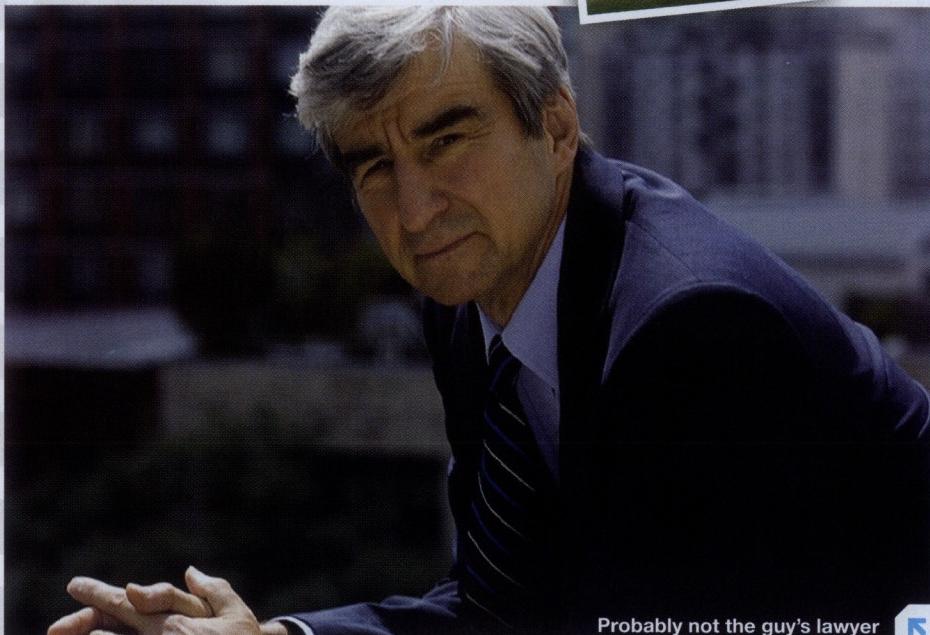
18 ANGRY SACKBOY
He sits in the corner, punching his palm, sneering. We warned you.

GO AUSSIE GO

In an extensive interview with gamesindustry.biz, Tom Crago, president of the Game Developers Association of Australia (GDAA), has said that the Australian games industry has been "relatively resilient" in regards to the economic crisis.

He also said that "with the exception of Pandemic closing, there have been no casualties in the Australian market... We've not surveyed the market this year, but we anticipate that it will be a year of growth in terms of employee numbers within the development community, and also in terms of revenue. But moderate growth – and certainly not at the levels we've become used to over the past few years."

Unfortunately, around the time of this interview being published, Transmission Games, the team responsible for the WWII flight game *Heroes Over Europe* and *Ashes Cricket 2009*, has laid off 28 staff members.



Probably not the guy's lawyer ↙

PS3 FIRMWARE DRAMA

Florida man John Kennedy has filed a class-action suit against Sony Computer Entertainment of America (SCEA) due to September's 3.0 firmware update allegedly turning his PS3 from an ace games machine into a useless black box. SCEA then charged a US\$150 repair fee to bring the cactus console back to life. The PS3 was bought in January this year.

The basis of the complaint is that "as a general rule, Sony 'encourages' PS3 owners to install the

latest version of system software, Sony required users to install the Firmware 3.0 update." OPS had heard of some troubles with update 3.0, in particular in relation to playing Naughty Dog's *Uncharted*, though the shortly-released update 3.01 amended these problems. We haven't heard of the update killing, frying, or otherwise rendering consoles inoperable. If you are having technical dramas with this decade's best console, ring Sony on 1300 365 911.

IN SHORT...



EA has registered the trademark 'The Ripper' for an upcoming game, supporting rumours that Visceral Games is developing a game based on the unsolved murders of Jack The Ripper.



DJ Hero? Old news. Activision has started to recruit developers and DJs to work on the game's sequel. At least one UK dev is already talking to Freestyle Games, the force behind *DJ Hero*.



In its launch week, the PS3 Slim sold 40,000 units in the UK. In the week after launch, Japanese consumers bought 152,530 Slims, while Aussies bought 21,000 units in the first four days of it going on sale.

WHAT'S HOT OR NOT

Too hot to handle? Or too cold to hold?



Gullwings

Mercedes' latest AMG at TGS. 'Nuff said.



Ducks?

We don't know what's sold here, but we're sold!



DJ Hero

We're hooked, utterly and completely



The Pantry

Open 24/7/365 in downtown LA, it serves wicked pancakes



Go! Go! Go!

PSP Go. Light. Comfortable. New...



No! No! No!

...astoundingly, surprisingly pricey



Bobby Kotick

Also known as Mr. Scepticism, Pessimism, and Fear

NEWS

**STATUS:
DELAYED**

In a title landslide, several blockbusters have been pushed to 2010. Ask Santa to come back next year with the following.

BIOSHOCK 2

Moved to a "fiscal year" 2010 Strauss Zelnick, Chairman of Take-Two, has blamed additional development time, "We felt that it was essential to invest the additional time to ensure that this title will deliver what its fans expect and deserve."

**RED DEAD
REDEMPTION**

Also moved to a late 2009 or early 2010 release date, Take-Two has released an official statement saying that they wish to maximise the experience in terms of gameplay and marketing.

GOD OF WAR III

Although the hopeful had put a 2009 release on the highly anticipated *GoWIII*, Santa Monica studios has pushed the release date to a possible Q1 2010. Santa Monica studios said the "core structure of the game has already been completed," and are pushing for the highest quality possible.

HEAVY RAIN

Quantic Dream co-CEO, Guillaume de Fondaumière has confirmed it will be released early next year. "A game like *Heavy Rain* needs space... People can't afford to buy all those games so we wanted to give *Heavy Rain* a chance to have its own release window."

MAX PAYNE 3

Delayed until early next year, Take-Two CEO Ben Feder has said that the delays are due to developers who feel that "it was essential to invest additional time to ensure that this title will deliver what fans expect and deserve."

BLUR

According to Activision CEO Michael Griffith, the move is being made to "fully optimize the vision [Bizarre] set out to create for *Blur* including a distinctive and groundbreaking multiplayer mode that will appeal to a broad audience."

I AM ALIVE

Delayed until next year, possibly early April, Ubisoft CEO Yves Guillemot has said that the game has been "postponed until next year, as the game needs more work."

SCREENTEST: Your favourite games as movies**GTA IV**

Killed, smuggled and sold

The Director

Francis Ford Coppola

The Plot

Niko Bellic, immigrant and veteran of the Bosnian war, is persuaded by his cousin Roman to immigrate to America in pursuit of the American dream. He is also searching for the man who betrayed him and his old army unit. The city of New York Liberty City becomes the perfect backdrop for the world of drug smuggling and murder where Niko's decisions not only affect his future but the people around him. Niko begins to build his reputation amongst the crime world, finding time to kill by, well, killing those in his way.

The Pitch

The Godfather with a hint of *Scarface* but with more violence.

Green Light or Development Hell?

Francois Coppola has proven that he can create a film that can utilise violence and mix it with emotion to bring to screens something

that had not really been viewed by audiences. Just think about the greatness that was and is *The Godfather* but in a modern setting full of lies and murder. The movie tries to communicate the struggle of immigrants trying to move to a new country and trying to fit in. As well as dating, bowling and getting drrrrrrrrrunk.

Best Line:

Brucie: "I was hanging in the clubs, you know, flexing my muscles"

The Cast:

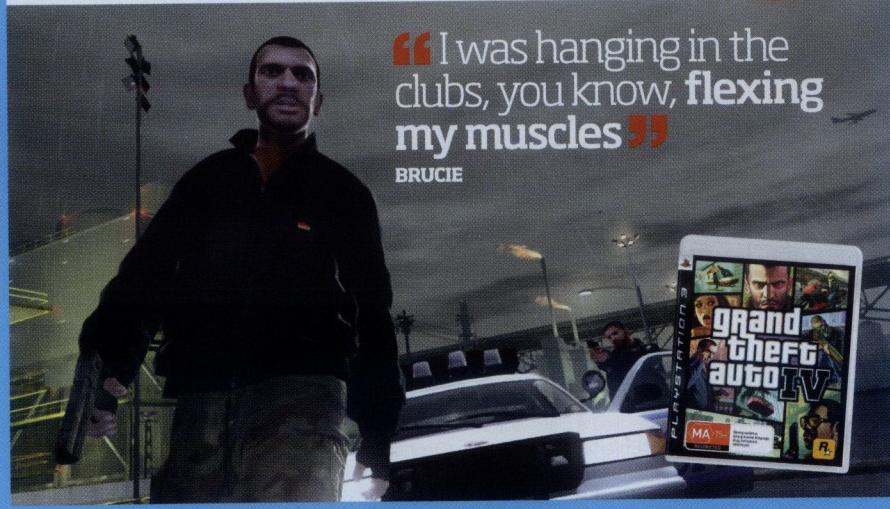
Vladimir Putin as the immigrant Niko

Jason Statham as the nut-job Brucie

Jeremy Irons the back-stabbing Dimitri

Doug E. Doug the as cool, confident, Little Jacob

Kate Hudson plays the good girl Kate McReary

**NUMBER CRUNCHING**

185

Number of people (in thousands) who attended Tokyo Game Show this year

**SEPARATED AT BIRTH**

NO. 10 Brick from *Borderlands* - Callan Mulvey

Mulvey, star of TV's *Rush* and *Underbelly*, survived a head-on car crash several years ago, which means he has as much metal in his face that Brick wraps around his fists. Both have matching scars (well, one) and a stare that says "you better not spill my beer."

BORDERLANDS™

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FACE THE MADNESS!

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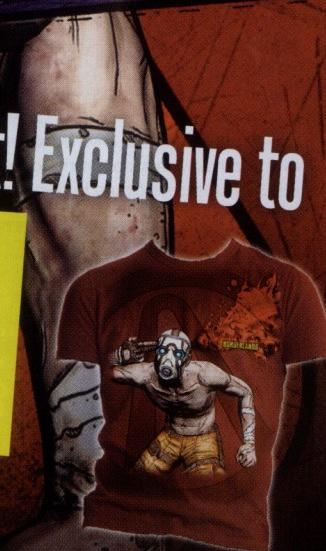


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PLAYSTATION 3



XBOX 360

XBOX
LIVE



IT'S READY TO BE PLAYED



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TOP 10 HATS

Sun protection. Hair management. A sign of status. Mark Twain once said "Clothes make the man", so if you're looking for an archetype, friend, read on...



FLAT CAP

SEAN DEVLIN

Devlin's flat cap, or driving cap, fits the brogue like a fist fits a chump's face: like there's no other place it could be. Worn by the working class, it's a fitting motif and disguise for a weathered race-driver turned spy to wear whilst blasting Nazis.



PEAKED CAP

M. BISON

Sometimes a peaked cap's worn in ceremonies by anyone who can march in a line. Other times it's only given to the dudes who have led armed forces effectively over dozens of years, commanding respect. Atop the evil Bison, that severe pulled-down peak is just terrifying.



TRICORN

CERVANTES

Pirates versus ninjas. If it's a battle of fashion, pirates win for their ostentatiousness. The Spanish mad-man's head gear is a tricorn because there's no other scenario in which you'd wear this; except on the high seas, especially with the evil eye bolted in to the middle of it.



KASA

KUNG LAO

Just as Aborigines used a boomerang to hunt their foes, Kung Lao uses a hat to decimate. Buddhist monks would consider his a type of kasa – albeit with a monstrous brim made out of solid steel. Clothing as weaponry? Genius!



BASEBALL CAP

SCOUT

So common that everyone who reads this mag (we suspect) owns, or has worn: a baseball cap. It's malleable and able to display your sporting teams and beliefs. Also equipped by the special forces, who can secure their target in the time you take to boil an egg.



CHIMNEY POT

DAMPIERRE

More of a chimney pot than a top hat, Dampierre's choice was a hit with the every man when it first came out. The placement of the crown motif – royalty, respectability – around its base is a juxtaposition to his fighting style. Honestly, it's just magnificent to look at.



STETSON

JOHN MARSTON

Turn-of-the-century man needs something manly, and respectable in a hostile terrain. Enter the Stetson. John Marston's looks like it's made out of a combination of leather and diesel. That dip at the front just exaggerates his "did you just step on my toe?" scowl.



CROWN

KING OF ALL COSMOS

King's qualifications to the role of King Of All Cosmos are dubious: belligerent, wrathful, binge drinker, dressed in a variety of tights with an Elizabethan ruff. But, pop a plain looking crown on him that makes his face look even more geometrical and it just works.



COWBOY HAT

AVERY CARRINGTON

Property magnate and Texan, Avery Carrington, keeps his cowboy hat close, representing a hard-working and dependable man, qualifying him for only the first quality when it serves his interests. The hat's a symbol of power, hard-fought for and going nowhere.



SIREN HAT

MONKEY

Is man expected to perform a particular role in society according to the cultural coding of his attire? What if the clothing became controlling? These are the questions the siren hat raises, where the hat wears the man. Or simian, in this case.



WWW.TEKKEN.COM

TEKKEN 6

THE #1 FIGHTING GAME IS BACK!



Violence



namco



PS3

PlayStation 3



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WHERE TO NOW?

After the verbal trouncing we gave *King Of Fighters XII* a couple of issues ago, we came to the conclusion the series needs an overhaul lest it die in the dirt. Behold! New directions!

KING OF WRITERS

KING OF MITRES

BURGER: KING OF FIGHTERS

KING OF FIGHTERS: ALL IN BRAWL

THE STORY

You are a wordsmith, ready to turn negative reviews in to glowing press to the general game-buying public, ensuring awesome sales. All accomplished by a cunning marketing campaign, or ingenious advertising in magazines, or viral videos.

THE STORY

Dads and self-professed handy-men (and women) meet astounding early on Saturday mornings in massive warehouses across the country, firstly to buy materials, but also to sort out who has the best pergola by a best-of-three biff-fest.

THE STORY

Dark times for burger chains. Salads and 'lite' options have infiltrated menus. Unease and a state of discontent provokes one chain to make a triple meat-patty burger with a fist of cheese between each slice in protest.

THE STORY

Could you imagine it? Heihachi from *Tekken* has merged with Bison from *Street Fighter*, but Ryu from *DOA* is determined not to let them kill Sonya from *Mortal Kombat*, but it turns out that Sarah from *DOA* is her sister...

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

Any respectable (or even scandal-drenched) politician or corporation has a team of spin-doctors on hand to defuse any possible bad press. Games PR are often required to make the most of a bad situation: this is their game.

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

Why focus on destruction all the time? Many brawlers take advantage of the environment only to smash through it; this could be the chance to create the perfect fighting stage and also fight with tools, wood and garden umbrellas.

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

The US has a multitude of burger chains different to the ones here in Aus – Carl's Jr, Wendy's, In-N-Out Burger, Jack In The Box – and yet despite the mass competition they all thrive. This is designed to find a market leader, ready to make a monopoly.

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

KOF Vs Tekken Vs Street Fighter Vs Soulcalibur Vs Dead Or Alive Vs Fatal Fury Vs Virtua Fighter Vs Mortal Kombat, all in to see who really is the king of fighters.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

See that USB port on the front of your PS3? Go to your PC, unplug your keyboard, and jam it in your console. Your screen will be a smorgasbord of social network sites, emails, webpages and scans of magazines.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

A kind of top-down view, in 3D, utilising materials on shelves. Nail-guns, superglue, BBQ coals all make excellent weapons. After emerging from the scrap, it's off home to make a casual dojo.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

Hello shovelware! Lots of incomprehensible SIXAXIS shaking, twisting, thumbstick rotating, button mashing to launch your particular brand of burger at the advancing horde of consumers.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

Chameleon's only need apply. Since there's nearly 10 different styles of game, some with light, medium, heavy attacks, some with buttons for each limb, you're going to have to be on top of your franchises.

PROBABILITY

Maybe as a PSN title. And, hey, Sega did a typing game with *Typing of the Dead* on the Dreamcast years ago.

PROBABILITY

It could happen, and if it did, expect perfect review scores (10 out of 10, every time).

PROBABILITY

We're sure we've played this already on the web, somewhere. It could exist as a piece of marketing from a burger chain. Hit Google, kids.

PROBABILITY

It's being made right now: Zero. However, for some fan boys, the fight's already over.

Yeah I'm hanging on.

"THE BEST OF THE POTTER SERIES SO FAR"

- CLAY SMITH,
THE INSIDER



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AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



LINZ, AUSTRIA GREEN MACHINE

Looks like there's a new gadget coming out perfect for resident girly-man, *Metal Gear Solid*'s Raiden. An eco friendly vibrator known as the "green" sex toy has been revealed in Austria. Powered by a hand-cranking system, and dubbed the "Earth Angel", the winding action powers its rechargeable batteries. A spokesperson for the manufacturer said, "We wanted to produce a environmentally friendly sex toy that appealed to all customers regardless of gender". We anticipate Raiden being the first customer.

LONDON, ENGLAND GET 'EM TIGA

While our local industry is simmering, the UK video game tax support scheme has come under scrutiny from TIGA (similar to our iGEA). Currently, developers in the UK are given funding according to their location in the country rather than being treated under a national scheme, and "fails to ensure that all regions with potential are adequately supported," said Richard Wilson, CEO of TIGA.

BERLIN, GERMANY A NAZI SURPRISE

Germans gamers have it tough. Any visual reference to swastikas in a game and it's banned. Activision's latest shooter, *Wolfenstein*, substantially based around the Third Reich, was reworked to erase any rogue symbols. However, according to a translation from German site 4players.de, Activision said that "although it is not a conspicuous element ... we have decided to take this game immediately from the German market" due to one swastika making it through.

TOKYO, JAPAN PS3 FTW

Thank your lucky stars that you have a PS3, especially if you own a one in Japan. Konami has released a statement and regrettably informs Japanese Xbox 360 owners that *Silent Hill: Homecoming* won't be coming home. Konami puts the blame on "assorted issues" for not releasing the western developed game in Japan, but has told the 360 users to "look forward to future releases in the series."

ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA PARKOUR PROBLEM

Its no Venice, but Altair and Ezio would have definitely escaped from authorities after two men were caught practising the extreme sport of parkour on top of a pharmacy building. They couldn't find any rooftop gardens or haystacks to jump into and were each fined \$200 for their troubles.

INTERNATIONAL CHARTS



UK Source: ELSPA

- 1 FIFA 10 EA
- 2 Need for Speed SHIFT EA
- 3 Batman: Arkham Asylum Square Enix
- 4 Ninja Gaiden Sigma II THQ
- 5 Colin McRae DIRT 2 Codemasters
- 6 WET Bethesda
- 7 Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2 Activision
- 8 Guitar Hero 5 Activision
- 9 IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey 505
- 10 Call of Duty: World at War Activision



JAPAN Source: VGChartz

- 1 Tales of Vesperia Namco Bandai
- 2 COD4: Modern Warfare Activision
- 3 Kidou Senshi Gundam Senki U.C. 0081 Namco Bandai
- 4 Tears to Tiara Gaiden Aquaplus
- 5 Metal Gear Solid 4 Konami
- 6 Minna no Golf 5 Sony
- 7 Pro Yakyuu Spirits 6 Komani
- 8 Uncharted: El Dorado no Hihou Sony
- 9 WET Bethesda
- 10 Makai Senki Disgaea 3 Nippon Ichi



USA Source: NPD

- 1 Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2 Activision
- 2 Need for Speed SHIFT EA
- 3 Madden NFL 10 EA
- 4 Batman: Arkham Asylum Square Enix
- 5 The Beatles: Rock Band MTV
- 6 Guitar Hero 5 Activision
- 7 Katamari Forever Namco Bandai
- 8 NHL 10 EA
- 9 WET Bethesda
- 10 DIRT 2 Codemasters

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Coming soon to a store near you...

OCTOBER 2009

	DJ Hero GENRE: MUSIC DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
	EyePet GENRE: ADVENTURE DISTRIBUTOR: SCE
	Fairytale Fights GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: AFA
	PES 2010 GENRE: SPORT DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
	Alpha Protocol GENRE: RPG DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

	Planet 51 GENRE: ADVENTURE DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
	Scene It? Bright Lights Big Screen GENRE: FAMILY DISTRIBUTOR: WBI
	LEGO Indiana Jones 2 GENRE: ADVENTURE DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
	Rogue Warrior GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

	Castlevania: Lords of Shadow GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
	RAGE GENRE: SHOOTER DISTRIBUTOR: EA
	Army of Two: The 40th Day GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: EA
	R.U.S.E. GENRE: RTS DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
	Aliens Vs. Predator GENRE: SHOOTER DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

	Final Fantasy XIV GENRE: RPG DISTRIBUTOR: TBA
	Agent GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR
	Darksiders GENRE: ADVENTURE DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
	Crysis 2 GENRE: SHOOTER DISTRIBUTOR: EA
	Dante's Inferno GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: EA

DECEMBER 2009

	Avatar GENRE: ADVENTURE DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
	Guitar Hero: Van Halen GENRE: MUSIC DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION

	Bayonetta GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
	Dark Void GENRE: ADVENTURE DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
	Final Fantasy XIII GENRE: RPG DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
	Gran Turismo 5 GENRE: RACING DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
	Just Cause 2 GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

	Tony Hawk: Ride GENRE: SPORT DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
	Battlefield: Bad Company 2 GENRE: SHOOTER DISTRIBUTOR: EA
	BioShock 2 GENRE: SHOOTER DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
	Max Payne 3 GENRE: SHOOTER DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR
	Guitar Hero 5 GENRE: MUSIC DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION

NOVEMBER 2009

	Assassin's Creed II GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
	Modern Warfare 2 GENRE: SHOOTER DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
	Dragon Age: Origins GENRE: RPG DISTRIBUTOR: EA
	LEGO Rock Band GENRE: MUSIC DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER BROTHERS INTERACTIVE
	The Saboteur GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: EA
	Tekken 6 GENRE: FIGHTING DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

TBC, EARLY 2010

	Mafia II GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
	Red Dead Redemption GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR
	Heavy Rain GENRE: ADVENTURE DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
	Arcania GENRE: RPG DISTRIBUTOR: AFA
	Blur GENRE: RACING DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
	Singularity GENRE: SHOOTER DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"Going with an imaginary creature makes it feel that much more real." SCEJ lead designer Fumito Ueda, talking about the huge imaginary creature in *The Last Guardian*. Really?



"Man, Japan is over. We're done. Our game industry is finished." Keiji Inafune, head of R&D at Capcom (and the producer of *Dead Rising 2*). The exception? Capcom games, naturally.



"Due to legal and technical reasons we will not be offering the program at this time." SCEA on why they aren't providing a UMD-to-memory stick conversion for PSP Go.



[Sony's] entire strategy behind the PlayStation is to focus on gaming as an experience last and getting a Blu-ray player in your living room comes first." Trent Reznor, for some reason.

AUSTRALIAN CHARTS

Source: GfK



1 Need for Speed SHIFT



2 Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2



3 Guitar Hero 5



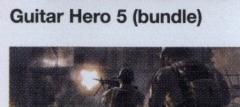
4 Colin McRae DiRT 2



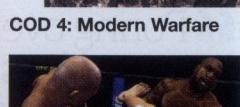
5 Batman: Arkham Asylum



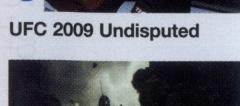
6 Guitar Hero 5 (bundle)



7 Star Wars Battlefront



8 Tekken 6



9 Call of Duty: World at War



10 Ashes Cricket 2009



CHOKING ON ROCK

“ Poring over the transcripts was like standing in the middle of a train wreck – everywhere you looked was ghoulish horror ”

The love of roots is the evil of all money. Bobby Kotick has a talent for provoking rage in gamers. Fiery, savage rage. At that hip and happening pow-wow, the Deutsche Bank Securities Technology Conference, the CEO of Activision Blizzard stood on stage and boasted about how his mission over the past decade had been “to take all the fun out of making video games.” His carrot of incentive was to reward “profit and nothing else.” And the stick? Miring his subordinates in “skepticism, pessimism, and fear.”

He positively beamed when he told of the success he had in bringing in executives from the packaging industry. The case he made before the assembled delegates was that running a games business was no different to running a box factory.

Did gamers find these comments offensive? You betcha. Poring over the transcripts was like standing in the middle of a train wreck – everywhere you looked was ghoulish horror. Take his dream of bumping up the profit margin of *World of Warcraft* from 25% to 50%. It’s telling that Blizzard has hired consultants from the gambling industry to make people less likely to quit *WoW*. After all, this is basically a game that exploits people with addictive personalities. Though unlike the public shame of poker machines, the 10 million+ *WoW* fiends are shuttled away, hidden from the world like housebound, battered wives.

He even spoke of destroying the console industry altogether. Why bother with the PS3 at all, when in a couple of years down the track it may be possible to sell *Guitar Hero* guitars with the game built in, and music streaming over

broadband into wi-fi mega-tellys.

Exploiting the weak... Bullying employees... Taking the fun out of making games... Reading Kotick’s words is enough to make any gamer’s blood boil. It’s possible, of course, that he didn’t really mean what he said. That he chose his words to please his audience: a hall full of bean-counting bread-heads. Politicians do this sort of thing all the time. It’s called ‘lying’.

The real test lies ahead: What will Kotick do about Bizarre Creations? This Activision-owned studio was supposed to have *Blur* ready for Christmas, but it’s already slipped to next year. A truly tyrannical leader would have flown over and busted heads, dropping a few F-Bombs, K-Rudd style. Who knows? Maybe he did. But the tardy Pommy studio has yet to be formally chastised, let alone dissolved. There was simply a dry press release, intended to get investors salivating about how much money this fusion of *Burnout* and *Wipeout* will make down the track.

Kotick must choose his next move very carefully. For if he proves that Activision is no place for creative excellence, then the excellent creatives will leave. This happens all the time. Rebels from Rare founded Free Radical. The disenfranchised of Disney founded Pixar. Activision itself was founded by ex-Atari programmers, who sought to keep the fruits of their labours; things could very well go full circle.

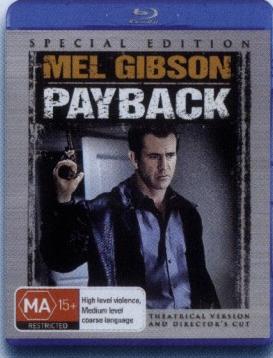
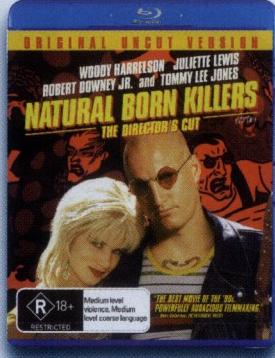
Kotick must beware. For if he roots his staff, then he will root himself.

Angry Sackboy is an ex-video game journalist with a severe temper. He speaks softly and carries a large stick. His opinions may not always match ours, but we can’t get rid of him.



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SONY TAKING OWNERSHIP

It is easy to forget just how good we had it in the last generation. PlayStation fans that is. With the PS2 console head, shoulders, abdomens and knees above the competition, Sony didn't have to worry about getting third-party publishers to bring great exclusives to their consoles. They flocked there instinctively, like the salmon of Capistrano. *Grand Theft Auto*, *Devil May Cry*, *Final Fantasy*, *Resident Evil* and many more all enjoyed huge success on the console, and both Sony and its fans smugly lauded it over everyone else.

This generation, however, is different. The Wii holds a comfortable lead, and the Xbox 360 has used its early release to get ahead on the PS3. As a result, the third-party exclusive has become something of a rarity: publishers need to push their IPs onto all the consoles in order to get the returns that they desire in this generation. And it just so happens that a by-product of this evolution is the loss of a powerful tool in Sony's marketing arsenal.

Indeed, Sony has really missed the third-party exclusives this generation. It was

and instead pitches them as Sony affiliated brands, even though they are not.

Take the recently released *Ashes Cricket 2009* as a textbook example. The ads on TV have been funded, at least in part, by Sony and developed by the console manufacturer, despite the fact that the game is on other formats. The advertisements end with a statement that suggests that if you want to play *Ashes Cricket 2009*, you will need a PS3. It is not true, of course, but it is subtly done and has an amazing affect on the subconscious. You leave these ads thinking, "only on PlayStation"

In this fashion, Sony is able to create a perception amongst the consumer market that they are the place to go in order to get all these great games. It is genius. And from the point of view of the publisher responsible for the game – in this case Codemasters – it is a win-win situation, as they're getting free advertising for their product to the masses.

It is part of the aggressive new strategy Sony has been taking over the past few months to make a greater impact in this

“Sony is able to create a perception ... that they are the place to go in order to get all these great games. It is genius”

an important weapon in the battle for sales supremacy with the PS2 and the power of that symbiotic relationship between exclusive software and the console's install base has not been lost on Sony. The company wants that weapon of mass marketing back! But how?

Over the last few months, Sony has revealed tactics that will take them into the future with third-party games they've marked as potential console shifters. Let's call it, 'Pseudo Ownership.' It manifests in the marketing of multiformat games in a manner that ignores the competition

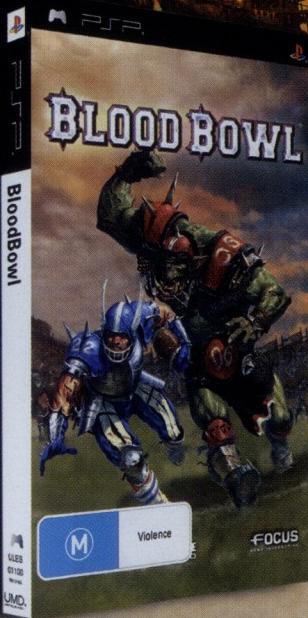
generation of gaming, which also includes the price-drop and the sexy, slimmer new look. Together they strive towards one goal: dramatically increasing the install base and attach rate of the PS3. And if it works, we may just start to see third-party support growing for the console for real.

Chris Stead has been around forever and has a lot of opinions. And hats.



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Blood Bowl - the famous Games Workshop board game - is now a video game! As a combination of a tactical strategy game and a sports game, Blood Bowl is first of all a great violent game where the ends justify the means to lead your team to the Blood Bowl finals. In order to reach this goal, you'll have to build and manage your team through many championships and tournaments.

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COMPETITIONS

WIN! WIN! WIN!

ROLL OUT

Thanks to Paramount we've got a bunch of great *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* gear to give away. One lucky winner will walk away with *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* on DVD, the original *Transformers* on DVD, a T1 Robot Replica and 10 extra DVDs, including *Star Trek*, *Watchmen* and *Tropic Thunder*. Five runners-up will receive *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* on DVD, plus Volume 1-5 of *Transformers Animated* and a cool Hasbro Power Botz. For a chance to score here, just answer the question below and follow the entry details on page 23.

Question: If you were a autonomous shapeshifting alien robot, what would YOU transform into and why?



Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen
is available on DVD and Blu-ray
November 5!

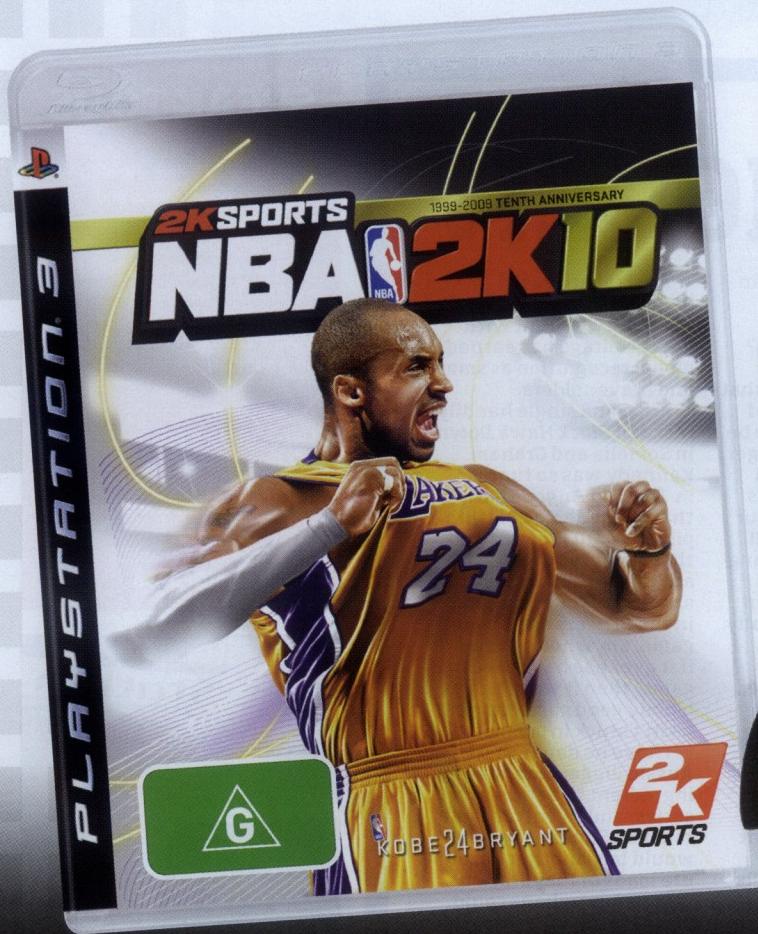


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SLAM DUNK

Thanks again to 2K we've got a big box full of NBA 2K10 goodies we're just itching to pass in your direction. The major prize contains a copy of *NBA 2K10*, plus T-shirt, watch, cap and basketball. Eight runners-up will receive a copy of the game. For a chance to beat the buzzer, answer the following question and follow the entry instructions below.

Question: What is your favourite NBA team and why?

BEYOND THE BORDER

Thanks to 2K we've got five awesome *Borderlands* prizepacks to give away. Each one includes a copy of *Borderlands* on PS3, plus a *Borderlands* kit bag, *Borderlands* T-shirt, *Borderlands* Mug, *Borderlands* Retro Tape Player USB and a *Borderlands* Notebook. For a chance at one of these epic swags simply answer the following question and follow the entry instructions below.

Question: Explain, in 25 words or less, why your side of the border is better than the other side.



HOW TO ENTER

To enter *Official PlayStation Magazine* competitions email your entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted!). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to OPS competitions PO BOX 1037, Bondi Junction 1355. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions close 18/11/2009. Winners will be notified by mail.

Speak to us!

LETTER OF THE MONTH!

FAIR GO DIGGER

Oh! Have you noticed how Australian characters don't really get a mention in PlayStation war games? I don't know about the rest of the computer gaming world, 'cause to me PlayStation is my world. I love being a war hero in a PlayStation game, I honestly do, and the story line is there to get us into role playing as the main character.

What I don't understand is why I always always have to play as a bloody Seppo, or a smelly Pom, or some heartless Russian commo bastard. It is obvious to this 39-year-old gamer and loyal PlayStation consumer who was spawned from the Space Invader era, that Australians don't have a say as to what character role we're playing in our games. Sure, we're great gamers and we are loyal supporters/consumers of international gaming franchises like COD, Brothers in Arms, etc. - but it gives me the pip when I have to listen to some Seppo constantly bellowing instructions to me throughout a game, or when I finish a game I get to plant a Russian flag on top of a Nazi building as some heroic solider of the Red Army. You know what I'm saying here, don't ya me cobber digger mate? If you don't, then you have never been to an ANZAC dawn service in your life and you might as well migrate to Siberia.

Don't we

have some good Australian programmers out there who have some nostalgic patriotism in their hearts?

If there was just one PlayStation game series that I had to play for the rest of my life, then I'd want it to be based upon an Aussie digger fighting in every war and battle that this nation has fought in. We once built our own fighter plane in WWII. It was called the Boomerang and we built 250 of them. They could have stuck it in IL-2 Sturmovik (which really is a great game), or some other flight sim game. It was a fairly average plane, granted, but I'd cream me pants to be playing the life of an Aussie pilot fighting the Hun in Europe, or the Japanese in the Pacific, in an Australian built WWII fighter. Well, screw all that "Seppo saves the world" propaganda. Get some balls on ya and face the facts, most of us don't think much of them anyway.

I want tough Johnnie Turk shooting me to ribbons on the beaches of Gallipoli. I want to be a Desert Rat giving Rommel the shits in Tobruk. I want to stop the Japanese war machine in Guinea and I want to play two-up against the Seppos in Berlin. I want to do all of this in a slouch hat and I want to do it all with pride while the last post calls.

Australian level headedness, tenacity and the ability to fight with great courage has earned us global recognition as smart and brave soldiers.

Eric Bana single handedly rescued Black Hawk Down in Somalia and Graham Kennedy was so funny in The Odd Angry Shot that he made Ho Chi Minh piss his pants. Despite all these facts you never see an Aussie soldier runnin' around pissin' in the soup in the officers mess in any game, anywhere, ever. And if it ever has happened in a game, then it wasn't a very bloody good game 'cause it hasn't stuck in my memory.

I have no doubt that Aussie diggers are the key ingredient to a successful series, and I'd bet me lamb roast on Sunday that we would buy another dozen ute loads of PlayStations just so Australians could play a game with some pride in themselves. It has to be up there with playing standards equal to COD.

I guess it's only fair that those NZ sheep shaggers get a mention in there too. You all know what ANZAC stands for, eh brew? And besides that, we could hang jokes on 'em all through the game.

Hey, did you hear the one about the Aussie and the Kiwi in a PlayStation game? Well, neither did I.

And that's a bloody joke, cobber.

Wade Thomason, WA

Long letter, good point. We reckon the best chance we'll have of a nod will be in the Call of Duty series – those games have featured a number of nationalities so far. The next one to follow Modern Warfare 2 is rumoured to be set in the Vietnam War – so we reckon we're a good chance of that.



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS... BRUTAL LEGEND

The letter of the month this issue will receive a copy of Brutal Legend for their troubles – enjoy!

SPEAK TO US

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
Derwent Howard
PO Box 1037
Bondi Junction, NSW 1355
ops@derwenthoward.com.au

...and also on Facebook!
tinyurl.com/OPSAus



GO TO WOAH

Hey OPS! Reading the mag for ages and it is awesome. I am really annoyed that the PSP Go is coming out in a week or so and there is nowhere that is advertising it. EB Games and JB HiFi would be the first to announce it but nope. The PS3 Slim gets announced at gamescon and it is getting advertised everywhere a week after its announcement. Why make a new PSP, that by the way rocks the socks of a monkey, and not worry about advertising it? It won't sell on its own. Why Sony, Why? P.S. I am so jealous of your job.

Morgan Edwards, via email

Retailers aren't going to be climbing over each other to really embrace the PSP Go that much, because the real money in games retail is the games themselves (and then convincing punters to trade them in for peanuts and then selling them again with a massive markup. The UMD-less PSP Go means owners buy their games online, and not from the store. We imagine that's more the reason why you're not seeing much of a buzz in shops.

BUYING THE FARM

You guys probably get some emails from wives/girlfriends complaining how their men are addicted to video games. I sent you guys an email a while ago saying how my girlfriend banned me from the PS3 for two weeks last year when GTAIV first game out. Okay, back to my subject. My loving girlfriend is addicted to that bloody FarmVille on Facebook. Whenever I drop by to see her she

is constantly on it. I tried to break conversation and she just ignores me. There she is planting the crops, milking that cow, collecting the eggs, etc. She spends about an hour doing all this. I don't get why FarmVille would be so addictive for women. I love when she and I play LittleBigPlanet together but now all she wants to play is FarmVille. What is the world coming too?

Brad Morris, Queensland

FarmVille? We've never heard of it, but it sounds lame. Still, if your girlfriend is addicted to a game, you might as well grab your pitchfork and make hay while the sun shines. Use it as leverage whenever you feel like a little time in front of the PS3



OPS IS NOW ON FACEBOOK!

Updated throughout the week, our Facebook page has behind-the-scenes photos, interviews and updates on what's happening in the world of PlayStation.

Become a fan and join in Facebook Fridays! We want to hear what you have to say about the mag, games... anything you want to share with your fellow readers and gamers!

All that, and we even have exclusive competitions, like our Need For Speed SHIFT comp. Go to tinyurl.com/OPSAus or search for "Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia" at facebook.com. Click on 'become a fan' and we'll see you there!

Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia 'Tribute' by Tenacious D available as Rock Band DLC today. How many more reasons does everyone need to buy this game?

18 September at 11:17 · Comment · Unlike

You and 4 others like this.

Zachary Webb It's taken me this long to actually try Rock Band, and I actually can't see much point going back to GH, now that I've seen the DLC on RB owns hard!

18 September at 11:44 · Delete · Report

Adrienne Tamplin Hell yeah. Respect the D.

18 September at 12:25 · Delete · Report

Matthew White And it's awesome

18 September at 18:30 · Delete · Report



CUTTINGS

TELL HIM HE'S DREAMING

Hi OPS

Just wondering, with the release of a PSOne classic, *Final Fantasy VII*, on the Japanese PlayStation store, how long will it be 'til we see an Australian release?

PS. Fantastic mag.

Mitchell Whitney, via email

Dude, we're looking at it right now – on the Australian PlayStation Store. It's \$15.95 and compatible with both PSP and PS3. Get stuck in.

NOTHING BUT NET

Hey,

I love your mag, you guys are really funny.

I am a fan and player of basketball and I want to know which basketball game to get; NBA 2K10 or NBA Live 10.

Which one is better and why?

Daniel Czaczun, via email

The jury is still out at the time of going to print – we haven't played both of them yet. Tune in next issue.

FULL CREDIT

Regarding 'No Credit Where Credit's Due' (October 2009), it is good news that the worst thing to complain about Sony is that they won't take \$6 off your credit card. Many shops and companies have a minimum transaction amount for purchases on credit since the charges from the credit card company stop small transactions from being profitable. Yes, it would be nice if Sony covered those fees for us but it is hardly surprising that they do not.

Bowie Owens, via email

Small transactions are less profitable, but according to www.creditcards.com, "Merchants cannot impose minimum or maximum purchase amounts for credit card transactions."

Speak to us!

YOU GAME LIKE A GIRL

Hey OPS,
I'm writing this letter on behalf of all my fellow female gamers, to let the fellas out there know that YES girls play first-person shooters just as well as the guys.

I got into games after watching my partner play countless hours of *Call of Duty* and whatnot, and asked him to teach me how to play – to his disbelief.

Well, after days and hours of both of us feeling sea sick with my noob movements, he got me to a pretty good standard and started my online career.

As I have got better at them the PSN messages started coming.

Unfortunately, they're all either accusing me of being a guy with a female PSN tag, or trying to chat me up for some creepy net chat (if you know what I mean).

Just venting some steam trying to get the fellas to give us a fair go online, and not put us down through weird PSN messages or through

nasty slurs on the headset.

I've now sadly changed me PSN tag from my girly one to one that people can't tell what I am.

Love you all, keep up the great work.

Tina Heming, NSW

Some guys can't handle strong women. In fact, some guys can't handle women at all. Some men are just a little broken. Use it to your advantage. Talk sexy, and decimate all. Speaking from experience, most guys can only do one thing at

a time, and we imagine it's pretty hard to concentrate on winning a deathmatch when all the blood is running from your brain to your wedding tool. Actually, this probably won't help. Forget we said any of that, really.



This picture couldn't be any more inappropriate for this letter

THE PlayStation® CROSSWORD!

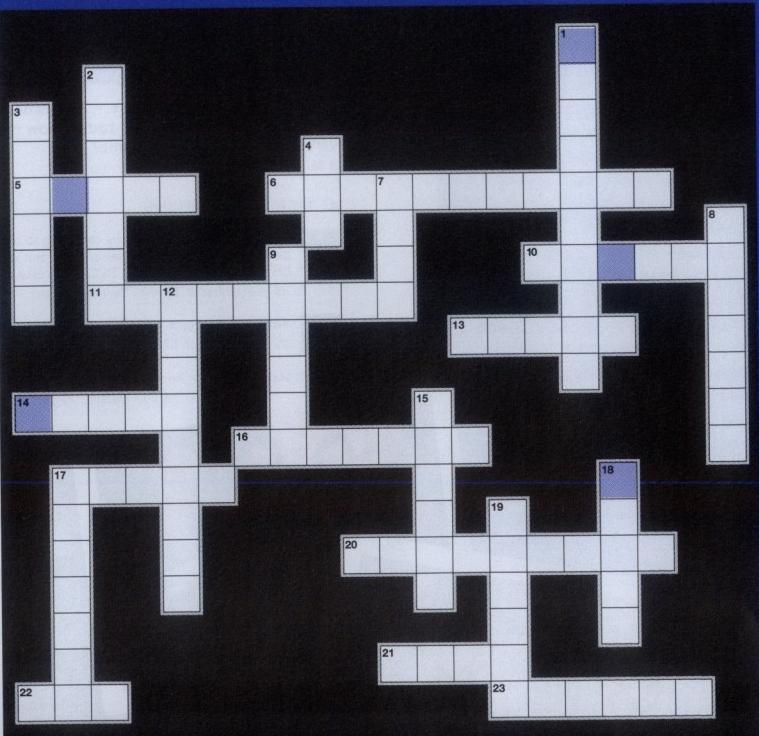
TEST YOUR BRAIN TO WIN A GAME! How to enter: Use the letters from the coloured squares and re-arrange them to form the name of a videogame character. Send your answers to OPS@derwenthoward.com.au with OPS Crossword as the subject. Entries close November 18.

Across

5. Niko's cousin (5)
6. The man behind *Metal Gear Solid* (5,6)
10. Drake's girly friend in *Uncharted*, Elena _____ (6)
11. Sev is short for _____ (9)
13. The F in *F.E.A.R.* (5)
14. Soap's Captain in *Modern Warfare*, Captain _____ (5)
16. Head-crab killer, Gordon _____ (7)
17. The crazy antagonist from *Spyro 2* (5)
20. The bad guy in *Far Cry 2* (3,6)
21. *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* is set on the Island of _____ (4)
22. A damp sort of game (3)
23. Lead character in *Dino Crisis* (6)

Down

1. Tekken 2's swordsman (10)
2. Kratos' weapon of choice, the Chains of _____ (7)
3. Talking sky voice in *Shadow of the Colossus* (6)
4. One thing you can't do in the new *Prince of Persia* (3)
7. Altair's descendant (4)
8. The first track in *MotorStorm*, The _____ (7)
9. Prototype's prototype, Alex _____ (6)
12. Chris Redfield's old partner, Jill (9)
15. Crash Bandicoot 3: _____ (6)
17. The underwater city in *BioShock* (7)



Last month's answers: Across 4. ALPHACENTAURI 7. PYRAMIDEHEAD 9. AOUILA 14. GABE 15. PROLOGUE 17. ONUIN 18. LESBIANS 19. THEBEATLES 22. ZERODIVIDE 23. LATVERIA 24. METALSLUG Down 1. FINALFANTASY 2. BLAZBLUE 3. TAU 5. TRUDEVILSLUGER 6. BIGSHELL 8. DISNEY 10. ANGEL 11. TROUBLEBONNE 12. WATER 13. FURRIES 16. DARYKOID 21. SEGA

THE OPS QUIZ THING

Our imaginatively titled quiz will sort out the wheat from the chaff. Prove your worth with these brainbusters!

HORROR SPECIAL

1. What do these actresses have in common?



2. What, according to Dracula, is a miserable little pile of secrets?

3. What does the 'T' in T-Virus stand for?

4. Who Am I?

I was a gallant 13th Century knight, cut down in my prime by an arrow through the eye. Now I'm back from the grave to fight the evil wizard Zarok!



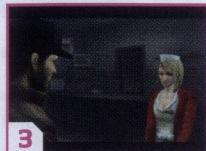
5. What do the silliest secret endings to the *Silent Hill* games have in common?

6. Mitochondria were the villains in which PSone survival horror title?

13. IDENTIFY THE GAMES FROM THE SCREENSHOTS:



7. Which is the odd one out, and why?



8. Which gaming hero borrowed his name from two different sci-fi authors?



9. The novel that inspired *BioShock* is a best-seller again, 52 years after it was published. Name it.

10. Who worshiped Gozer?

11. What PS2 horror game had a cheat code to increase the size of the main character's tits?



12. Which horror novelist likes to refer to himself as a 'Dreamweaver'?

ANSWERS 1. They have all starred in Resident Evil movies 2. A man 3. Tyrant 4. Sir Daniel Fortesque 5. UFOs 6. Praetor Eve 7. 3 - *Silent Hill* Origins was not developed by Team Silent. More's Outbreak File #2 8. Isaac Clarke; Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke 9. Altis Shrugged 10. The Sumerians 11. Hunting Ground 12. Geth Mareshi 13. A. Clock Tower 3 B. Darkwatch C. Resident Evil

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INCOMING

Assassin's Creed II



PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: NOVEMBER | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL

ASSASSIN'S CREED II

Killing time

Apparently *Assassin's Creed* did some nice business in Japan. It's for this reason Ubisoft decided to make an appearance at this year's Tokyo Game Show to show off the sequel. Patrice Desilets, *Assassin's Creed II*'s creative director, took us through an all-new mission in the bustling Ubisoft press room.

The mission Desilets demonstrated seemed quite straightforward. Ezio had a target to whack, but he had to get in close to rid the area of any potentially dangerous archers before doing so. As he leapt and scrambled his way

around the rooftops assassinating the guard goons they were replaced by friendly ones – subordinates of an associate we met briefly at the beginning of the mission. The reason for this wasn't initially clear to us, but became obvious later on.

Between smiting archers Desilets also showed us how the civilian population can be brought on board to make your job a little easier. Should you encounter a group of mercenaries (they're usually loitering in dark alleys causing mischief and teasing cats) you can pay them to tag along for some instant hired muscle. Similarly, you can also stuff some coins down the cleavage of a gaggle of prostitutes to encourage said ladies go and waggle their moneymakers in front of a particularly inconvenient group of enemy troops – thoroughly distracting them and making it a lot easier for to go about your business. We saw both of these elements showcased, and they add an additional layer of strategy the original *Assassin's Creed* just didn't boast.

Desilets eventually found his target and quickly stabbed him one of the more crucial areas of the neck. After a brief chat, however, Ezio found himself surrounded by a whole

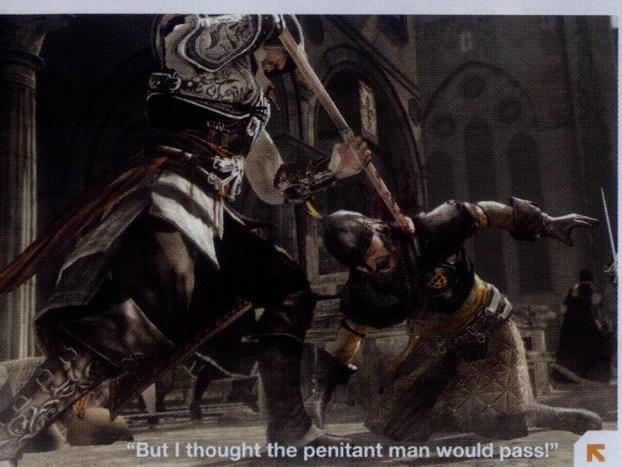


mess of guards. Fortunately, these guards were quickly cut down by the friendly archers Ezio had aided just 10 or minutes ago.

Desilets also used the demo to visit a store in order to show us the cosmetic changes you can make to Ezio's clobber – which means you can now have an assassin who doesn't dress entirely in white, as he can dye his clothes for a quick disguise. *Assassin's Creed II* has far more interactivity with the world than the first. He also gave us another taste of the double kill (accidentally leaping onto two nearby women, directly in front of the two guards he'd meant to execute) which looked deliciously brutal.

IT'S LIKE...





"But I thought the penitent man would pass!"



The improvements with basic movement over the first game appear minor, but welcome. Ezio moves subtly differently to Altair, and there's a better sense of momentum. Hold a steady course and Ezio will speed up a fraction, adding an extra boost to the already exciting and kinetic gameplay. He seems to strut as he walks, casually flicking the one-shouldered cape away from his sword whenever it flutters over his arm.

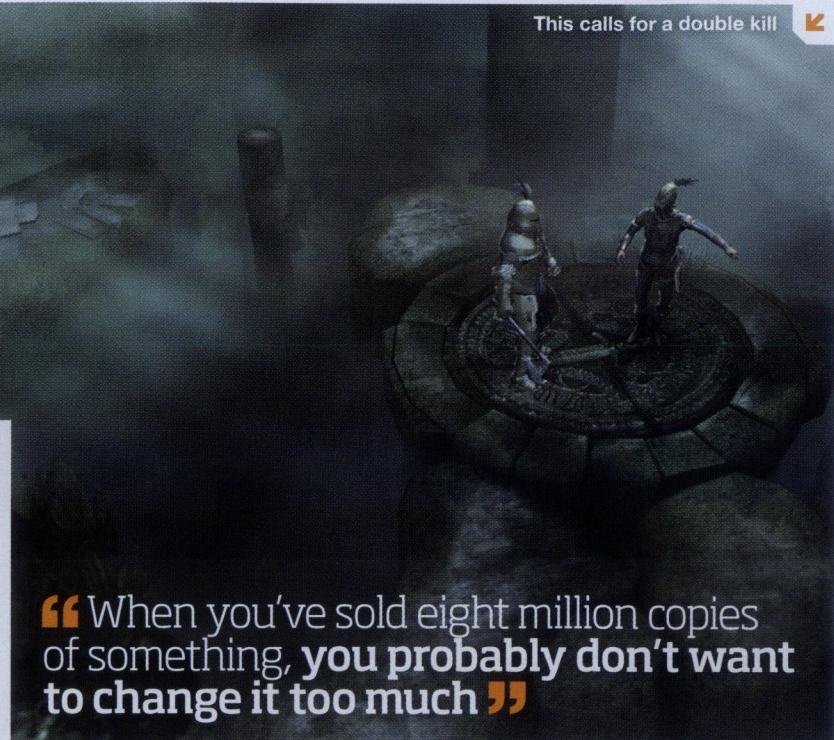
Aesthetically the game is similar to the very good-looking original, although the architecture is prettier, the civilians are spread more thickly throughout the cities and there are now time of

day effects. It looks very good, especially for a game this big.

By the looks of it Ubisoft hasn't changed too much, at least fundamentally, from the original at all. There have been tweaks everywhere, obviously in order to address the criticisms levelled at the eight-million-selling original – but it feels like an organic evolution, not a radical reboot. When you've sold eight million copies of something, you probably don't want to change it too much.

Turn over to the next spread for our Q&A with Patrice Desilets, and be sure to come back next issue for our review. ▶ Luke Reilly

This calls for a double kill



“When you've sold eight million copies of something, you probably don't want to change it too much”





"Ah, a coinpurse. Yes, that's exactly what I thought you were referring to" 

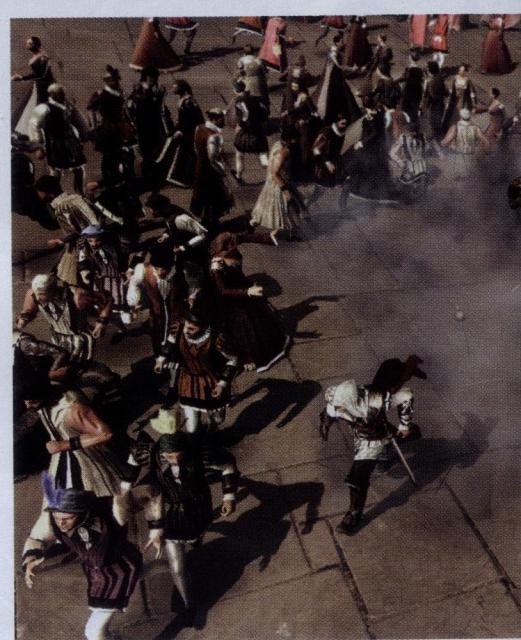
OPS: You previously insisted that character progression was a central development aspect of *Assassin's Creed II*. How did you represent that progression in the game?

PD: As immersion is a point we wanted to push, the main idea behind *Assassin's Creed II* progression was to relive the life of our main character – Ezio – and his evolution throughout the story that spawns for 30 years. Ezio isn't born an assassin. He will have to learn to become one. A large part of Ezio's story is him

Venice, Tuscany... Is Rome going to be a part of the game?

PD: It would be a shame to make a game set during Renaissance Italy and not include its capital. Rome is definitely going to be a part of the game! The city was also subject to a lot of suspicious activity at that time which is in line with the atmosphere/storyline of our game.

OPS: In the original *Assassin's Creed*, Masyaf was the home of the assassins. Is there a



and store a variety of collected objects. Any improvement to the city will help develop the local economy, rewarding you with periodic income, which can be reinvested in the city or used elsewhere in the game. In addition, Monteriggioni hides many secrets. Ezio will be able to discover some secrets about his family's past and many other surprises for players that will look into the most hidden areas of the Villa.

OPS: We've previously heard about famous families – the Medici and the Pazzi – and the conspiracy that is at the heart of their history. Will the game involve any other controversial history facts around great figures of the Italian Renaissance?

PD: Renaissance Italy was known for being a time of great political anarchy – there wasn't any one leader to rule the country and families would strive for power over the pieces of territory that composed Italy. In Venice you had the Doges. In Florence, the Medici family took control of the city – and left the Pazzi family behind – which triggered the Pazzi conspiracy

“Desilets eventually found his target and quickly stabbed him one of the more crucial areas of the neck**”**

answering the question – Who am I? What's my purpose? – He can't find the answer to this question in one year or two; it takes the span of his entire life. The player will have to accomplish a certain number of achievements in order for Ezio to learn new skills and turn into a Master Assassin. He will meet a lot of characters that will teach him new skills, how to behave and reach his full potential. As Ezio matures, his values, his morals, his sense of self – will also change.

OPS: We've heard about a lot of major locations Ezio will get to explore, like Florence,

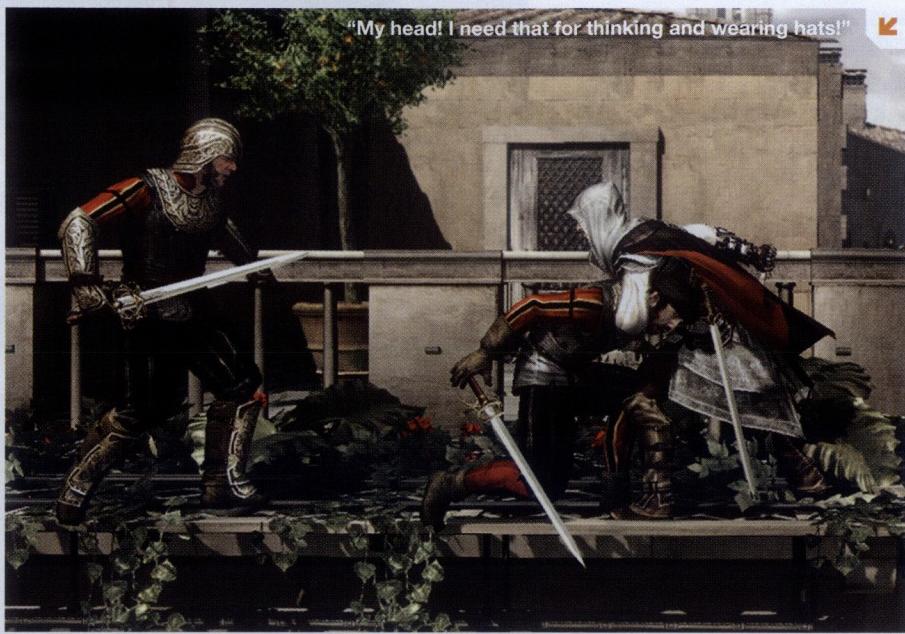
hideout where Ezio can go without being bothered in *Assassin's Creed II*?

PD: In his adventure, Ezio will discover the Auditore Family Villa, in the city of Monteriggioni. Perched atop a beautiful Tuscan valley, Monteriggioni has become run down and is badly in need of repair. The Villa will become Ezio's domain.

As Ezio, you will be able to invest in renovations, bringing the city back to its former glory. You may also choose to redecorate the Villa Auditore with famous renaissance paintings, stock your weapons and armor,

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SLIDE TYPE CHAT



A faulty smoke machine ruined the N*Sync reunion



WHEN THE MOON HITS YOUR EYE...

Ezio has a number of new tricks up his very loose sleeves his Arab predecessor didn't, like the ability to swim. However, TGS illustrated another one – Ezio's ability to use gondolas. Hop on one of the little wooden boats and you can guide it down Venice's many canals. The benefits of this? There aren't any guards on the water, so using gondolas is slow but undercover way of moving around the city.

against the Medici brothers. In Rome, the power essentially belonged to the Popes. One of the most famous Popes of the renaissance being Pope Alexander the Sixth. He was a typical Renaissance Pope in many ways but he was also probably the worst. All the Popes in the Renaissance treated the people's State like their own territorial kingdom: they raised armies, they marched into the field, they sacked cities, they launched campaigns against their enemies. Since betrayal was a common thing at the time, they also tended to rely on family members as close councilors and lieutenants, people they felt they could trust because they never were sure whether the other cardinals in the Vatican were entirely on their side. Alexander the Sixth pursued exactly those strategies but he took them to unheard-of lengths. You will get to meet "the Pope" in *Assassin's Creed II...*

OPS: What more can you tell us about Leonardo Da Vinci in the game?

PD: Leonardo is a student in Verrocchio's

workshop until 1476. Between 1476 and 1481, there is little historical information on Leonardo's life. Here is our version: what really happened between these dates is that the Auditore, Ezio's family, patron Leonardo to open his own workshop. Therefore, Ezio will meet Leonardo as he visits the artist in his workshop. Events will bring both Leonardo and Ezio to become very good friends and therefore close confident to one another. They are both progressive men and are each master of their arts. They spend a lot of time helping each other.

WE SAY

- ↑ Lots of Improvement
- ↑ Lots of killing
- ↑ Lots of locations

OPS IS...
Wetting its pants



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INCOMING

Darksiders



PS3 | GENRE: ADVENTURE | RELEASE: EARLY 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | DEVELOPER: VIGIL GAMES

DARKSIDERS

It's the end of the world as we know it... and we feel fine...

IT'S LIKE...



PS sat down with the very modest and refreshingly straight-shooting Joe Madureira one day before TGS to shine some light behind-the-scenes of *Darksiders*.

This is Vigil Games' first title, so we ask Madureira what's been most tough. Is it all hard? Do some things come easier than others?

"I think the biggest challenge was scaling the game appropriately," says Madureira. "We had big ideas, but we had a really small team early on. We did a lot of firsts, which is really hard for any developer, you know, building a team – that's very hard. Building new technology – which even for an established team is hard. Building a new IP – that's hard.

You know, if you're an established studio, that's shipped games, but you're making a new IP, there's still a lot that goes into it. We did all three of those things at the same time.

"We had to build our studio up, we started with six or eight guys, so the first year was building the tech – it's our own engine. So that was definitely the hardest thing, things came together much later than we would've liked, and also our ideas were bigger than we could execute. I mean, we had to cut, like, half the game. We still get remarks that there's so much stuff in the game, and it's so big for an action title, but the funny thing is we probably cut the game in half – we were going a little too crazy. Because it's our first game we just wanted to put everything in there. All four horsemen, playable! Co-op! Multiplayer matches! Arena modes, it was crazy, crazy, crazy. Eventually we were like, 'What can we execute well?' and we had to scale it back. It was very difficult, because we wanted to do EVERYTHING."

"But now the hardest stuff is behind us; we've got the tech, we've got the team, and so, if we can get people to love this first game we'll have a much easier time, next time."

It's quite clear the kind of gamers Vigil is targeting with the kind of game that it has –

what is it about *Darksiders* Madureira feels fans will appreciate?

"I think the thing that's gonna set *Darksiders* apart is that it's much more an adventure game," says Madureira. "I think it's very difficult to show exploration and puzzle-solving – when you're getting small glimpses it's always what can they see in 10 minutes that will blow them away, and it's always combat, right?"

"That's gotten us compared to a lot of the combat heavy games, but honestly, as soon as you get your hands on it, it's like, 'Oh, I have a free-roaming camera. Okay, I can go back to areas where I've been, there's a lot more exploration. I can swim, I can climb.' The *God of War* stuff starts to go away. You have guns, you can pick up objects in the environment, you have a horse. It definitely is hard to show the full scope of the game, but I think once gamers sit down with it they'll realize it is more of an adventure game, it's not a hack 'n slash."

That notwithstanding, having the combat lead from *God of War* on board is no small fact.

"Eric Williams, yeah, he's consulting now and we have, in the last few months, just been polishing everything, and combat was one of them," says Madureira. "Combat felt pretty good, but it wasn't as accessible to new



ROAD TO RUIN

It would be pretty redundant to have a Horseman with no beast between his legs, and yes, you do feel slightly neutered at the beginning of War's quest. That changes drastically when your mighty steed Ruin enters the fray. After reasserting your dominance and breaking him in again, you'll be able to call him up at a moment's notice. It's really a sight to behold as Ruin appears powerfully striding, rising from the ground in a shower of sparks, smoke and hellfire, at full cantor, and you mount by swinging on his back mid-gait.



"Having the combat lead from God of War is no small fact"

players as we'd like it to be and he had quite a bit of experience and a lot of great suggestions to improve the combat and just surface it a little bit. We had tons and tons of moves, but nobody could figure out how to do it – it was a little too complex and hardcore I guess.

"We're not trying to make a game that's so hard that only a few crazy guys will be able to master it, although I do love *Ninja Gaiden*. All that stuff was very valuable."

So is he happy with the product? Has Madureira's vision been realised?

"I do, man," says Madureira. "I do feel very happy with it. I think, obviously, as an insider I look at it and it's hard for me not to see all the things we wanted to do that never made it in. It's hard when you're close to it to really enjoy it, but the thing I enjoy most is watching people play it for the first time and watching

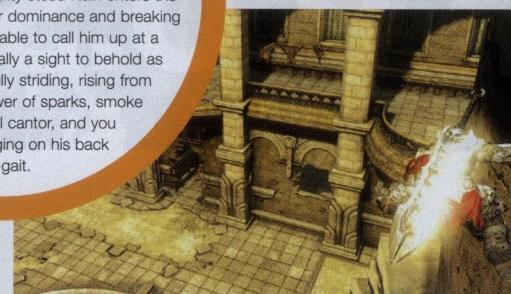
their reactions. You kind of forget, when you're so close to it, all of the crazy stuff that is in there, and appreciate it for what it is. It's been too long!"

How long?

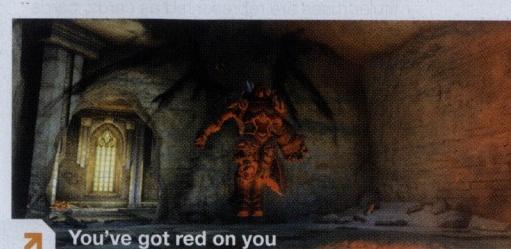
"It's been four years now," says Madureira. "Three years at THQ, and the initial year where we were self-funded and just working on getting all tech and getting all the stuff in place. But I don't count that."

Is that a scary time, that first 12 months?

"Oh yeah," says Madureira. "I mean, we're, like, running out of money – it's like, 'Hey, this publisher's interested, this publisher' interested – but they're not calling. What's going on! Let's go do another meeting.' That was all stuff that was nice once THQ picked us up, because then it was, 'Okay, now we can focus on the game.'" ▶ **Luke Reilly**



► It's like getting blood out of a sto... oh



► You've got red on you

WE SAY

- ↑ Distinctive look
- ↑ Challenging puzzles
- ↑ Huge array of weapons

OPS IS...
Looking for a pale rider...



INCOMING

R.U.S.E.

IT'S LIKE...



PS3 | GENRE: STRATEGY | RELEASED: EARLY 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | DEVELOPER: EUGEN SYSTEMS

R.U.S.E.

It's a trap

Despite its appearance, *R.U.S.E.* really isn't simply another WWII strategy game. It is a strategy game, which means nobody is going to buy it, but it's different. It has all the hallmarks of a conventional RTS. Large maps, equally matched units, pointing, clicking... the usual. But *R.U.S.E.* is more than all that. We'd go so far as to say *R.U.S.E.* is closer to real war than most strategy games have ever got, because it's all about deception. *R.U.S.E.* lets you trick, deceive and flat-out lie your way to victory. It's dirty, just like the real thing.

We watched as the usual base-building and unit-training shenanigans unfolded in front of us, but the crux of the game is trickery. The titular ruses are represented as cards, cards that you can play as they become available or hoard for a multi-pronged deception-fest. There are 10 ruses in all, and when activated they cover certain zones of your map. Activate the radio silence ruse and all your units in the area you've chosen will suddenly become invisible to the enemy, unless they're in line-

of-sight. You can set up entire decoy armies with fake equipment and wooden bases (that are booby trapped and will explode and kill any soldiers that storm it) that may distract your foe from paying heed to the real force you're currently beavering away at building on the other side of the map. There's one that disguises all your powerful units as weak ones, and vice versa. That tiny unit your enemy doesn't appear to be concerned about may be an armoured column seconds from tearing him a new one.

Like we mentioned, you can play multiple ruses at once for maximum effect. You can order radio silence over your own troops while sending out a spy to scope out enemy strengths in order to perfect a surprise attack on the right target.

R.U.S.E., like real war, is about the control of information and misinformation. The biggest army won't always come up trumps in *R.U.S.E.* – rather the cleverest.

Those with awful poker faces need not apply. **Luke Reilly**



IT'S TRICKY

The developers of *R.U.S.E.* have thumbed through history books for real-world inspiration. It was deceptions like the following that won the war for the Allies.

OPERATION MINCEMEAT

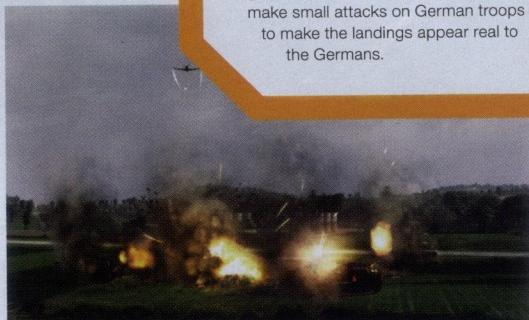
- A British plan designed to convince the Germans they had accidentally intercepted top secret documents that revealed the Allies were going to invade Greece and Sardinia in 1943 instead of Sicily (the real target).
- The documents were attached to a corpse with a carefully crafted fake identity, deliberately left to wash up on a beach in Spain.
- The ruse worked so well that on at least two later occasions when the Germans happened upon real top secret plans, they thought they were plants and dismissed them!

OPERATION FORTITUDE

- Designed to induce the Germans to believe that the main invasion of France would occur in the Pas de Calais rather than Normandy.
- Inflatable rubber tanks and plywood artillery, simulated radio chatter and the use of German agents controlled by the Allies in England (double agents) to send false information back to Germans led to its success.
- So successful that Hitler regarded the Normandy invasion as a decoy until it was too late, and he kept his tank units waiting for an attack on Pas de Calais that never came. Sucked in.

OPERATION TITANIC

- Involved the use of paratroopers – fake paratroopers. Hundreds of paratroopers were dropped along the French coast during the very early hours of D-Day, June 5/6.
- Six SAS men jumped along with the paratroopers to cause fuss on the ground, play combat recordings and make small attacks on German troops to make the landings appear real to the Germans.



WE SAY

- Huge maps, masses of units
- Lying to win = awesome
- Will anyone buy it?

OPS IS...
Hedging our bets



PS3 | GENRE: RPG | RELEASE: TBA 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX

FINAL FANTASY XIII

Awwwww yeaaaaaaaahhhhhh!

"Hey, take my picture"

After getting back from TGS and wading through the dishevelled mess in our bags, we cast aside the mountain of used panties, toy robots and wacky food and spied our special edition of *Final Fantasy Advent Children* on Blu-ray. As we watched the seven minutes of exclusive *FFXIII* footage (go buy this now by the way) all we could think about was what we saw up close and personal, and then got pissed that we have to wait until next year to actually play it.

We kicked off with the sexiest, most accurately effeminate lead to ever grace the series, Lightning, laying waste to scores of faceless goons in some of the most

stunningly beautiful CG we've ever seen. As it settled into regular gameplay (which is still prettier than most other title's cut scenes), showcasing the new chain attack system, we nearly had a seizure, overwhelmed by the pure unadulterated awesome. It's so gosh darned good-looking. It's like Blue Steel and Magnum had a baby.

Before we could breathe, we were genuinely gobsmacked as McConaughey clone Snow summoned a variation of Shiva (we assume) who then meshed with her sexy counterpart and morphed into a rockin' motorbike in a twist on the "summoning" mechanic.

If you're looking for us, we'll be in our

Japanese classes preparing for the Japanese launch next month. Wakadi mashita? *FFXIII* ichiban! So desne!  **Dave Kozicki**

WE SAY

- ↑ Gobsmacking graphics
- ↑ Chained attacks
- ↓ Not out 'til next year

OPS IS...
Psyched!



PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: TBA 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | DEVELOPER: TECMO

QUANTUM

It's science. You can't argue with that

When the first trailer of this neo-futuristic shooter, that's more than a tribute to the unfortunately excellent *Gears of War*, was released we got a little excited. It's likely the nearest thing a PlayStation owner will ever get to it.

Like *Gears of War*, however, *Quantum* is an exclusive – in this case, a PlayStation 3 exclusive. Producer, Kohei Shibata, has stated *Quantum* is a PlayStation 3 exclusive because

"Simply, it's the most powerful hardware."

Quantum's somewhat derivative looks are partially offset by the fact that action is set inside a 'living tower'. The game's landscape is constantly changing as the tower morphs, shifts and moves its innards.

We don't know much about this title, aside from the fact there are two main characters but you only play as one of them. We'll have more when we see more.  **Dave Kozicki**

 No guts, no gory



WE SAY

- ↑ Sexy co-star
- ↑ Looks like *Gears of War*
- ↓ No co-op? Seriously?

OPS IS...
Rolling the dice





ANOTHER

We're not going to lie to you. Your TV isn't good enough to make *Avatar: The Game* look the way it's supposed to. Our isn't either. Fact is, proper 3D-capable TVs are still a while off, and they're not going to be cheap when they're readily available. Australia already has high HD TV penetration, so it's unlikely many of us are seconds from running out and buying a 120Hz capable TV (and a HDMI cable - if you don't already have one) the moment they start hitting shelves anyway. But somebody had to kick this technology in the guts, so we sat down with *Avatar: The Game*'s animation director, Brent George, at this year's Tokyo Game Show to find out why Ubisoft raised its hand, and what the results look like. **WORDS: Luke Reilly**

We can't remember the last game we remember needing to put something on our faces in order to play it, but it would've been on the Virtual Boy. We all know how well that went down.

Like a lead zeppelin.

The glasses you'll need to don in order to experience *Avatar: The Game* will still make you look like Buddy Holly – but they are noticeably less problematic than Nintendo's cock-awful industrial-sized goggles.

Of course, in terms of 3D console games, there was *Sly 3* last generation and, as recently as last month, *G-Force* for PS3 – but cardboard red and cyan glasses usually aren't designed to fit on adult heads. Besides, *Avatar* isn't like those games. The 3D effect in *Avatar* goes far beyond *Sly 3* and *G-Force* – it just wasn't until we'd seen it that we realised the difference.

We won't wax long and hard about the boring stuff, because the technical details are for men with long beards who haven't necessarily killed a prostitute (but feel they

could probably get away with it in a pinch). Simply put, games like *Sly 3* and *G-Force* rely on anaglyph images to provide a 3D effect. Only certain coloured light is let through the red and blue (or cyan) lenses of the conventional 3D glasses. This technique was invented in 1853, by a German.

Avatar uses the kind of polarised light stereoscopic 3D technology currently making

its way into cinemas. That's what makes this game different. With this type of 3D tech, the light of the image put out by your TV screen switches between two polarisations, frame-by-frame, at 120 frames a second. Polarised specs – where each lens allows just one polarisation through – mean the TV is showing one image to your right eye and one image to your left eye, fast enough to seem like one persistent image.





“The 3D trickery makes the character and creature models **truly come to life**”

DIMENSION

In the future, all horses will have six legs (and all jockeys will be blue)

Basically, it's slightly different and it looks better. You just need some expensive kit. Making a good-looking 3D game sounds difficult to us. According to Ubisoft's Brent George, it is. Maintaining a high enough refresh rate to keep the action smooth is a lot harder when each picture has to be rendered twice (for the left and right eye). *Avatar* doesn't deliver the blistering visual feast of *Uncharted 2* as a result, but to be fair it's no slouch – at least in 3D. The environments themselves are quite snazzy (Pandora is a world of bright, vivid colours – a refreshing change, considering most shooters dunk their brushes exclusively in the brown paint pot), and the 3D trickery makes the character and creature models truly come to life.

Some of the effects are also nice. Flame technology lifted from *Far Cry 2* means you can squirt a jet of jellied fire into the various deadly plants that litter the world and the surroundings will burn away.

“It's a good idea to use the flamethrower on those,” says George, as we douse a flower big enough to swallow a small cow with a stream of fire and it shrivels under the heat.

He's right, because the other weapons seem to have little effect on the ferocious flora. We won't waste space regurgitating the film's plot here, and the game is set before it anyway. At any rate, *Avatar* offers

THREE REASONS JAMES CAMERON GETS TO DO WHAT HE WANTS

James Cameron, or Jimmy to his friends (probably), is a bankable guy. His films have grossed over US\$1 billion – and that's just in the US. Apparently he's got quite the temper, and he's been married five times, but here are three reasons Jimmy Cameron gets to do what he wants.

TERMINATOR 2: JUDGEMENT DAY

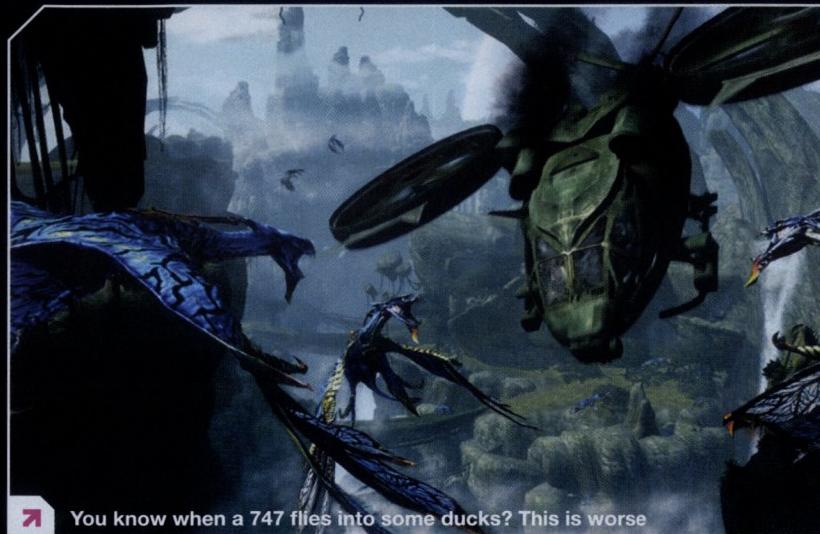
Because it's the sci-fi actioneer against which all others are judged.

TITANIC

Because it's the highest grossing film of all time.

TRUE LIES

Because it's awesome.



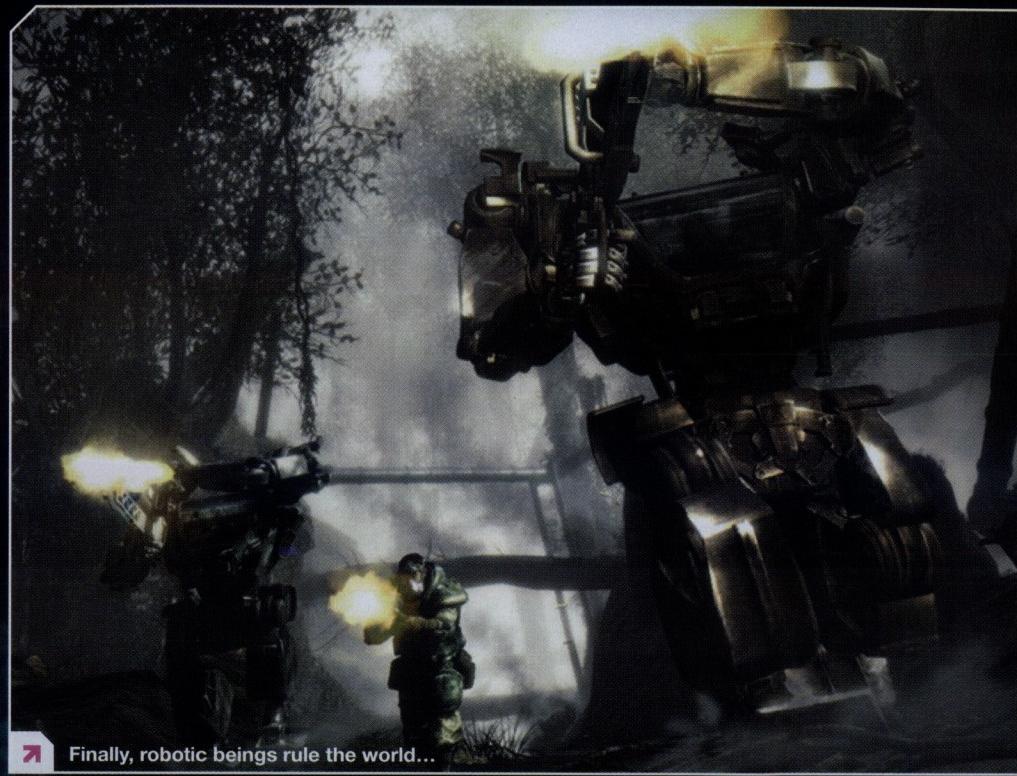
You know when a 747 flies into some ducks? This is worse

the opportunity to play as both the human invaders, and the Na'vi natives (10-foot-tall blue people who don't wear a lot of clothes). Our hands-on at TGS offered both, so we were able to feel what each had to offer. George was quick to stress that even as a human you can "do the right thing", although mowing down Pandora's indigenous community with a space-age machine gun didn't really feel that way. He also pointed out that even as a Na'vi, you're still really a human – the Na'vi body here is really just an engineered vessel – an avatar – for a human host. The movie revolves around the same concept. To be fair, we don't have much visibility on the story itself at this point, so we can't really judge yet.

The human section we played was a typical run 'n gun. Robust enough, but not revolutionary. We dispatched wave after wave of weird-looking wolves and various other beasties. At one point we even hopped onto an armed ATV (on caterpillar tracks) and started



Dogs: always happy to see you



Finally, robotic beings rule the world...

was a surprising one, and one that George was very eager to show off. Outside of the more conventional third-person blasting there's a *Risk*-like meta-game that sees you vying for control over the planet. Head into this mode and you'll be presented with a globe of Pandora and, to start with, one territory under your control. The remaining territories are broken up into segments and are in enemy hands. It's a turn-based game, and the idea is to annex the whole planet. However, you can't do this without troops and equipment, and in order to earn the required points you need to purchase said troops and equipment, you need to perform tasks and satisfy criteria in the main game. Take over key territories in the strategy meta-game and you'll also be able to unlock



“With this new 3D tech *Avatar* is quite a stunner. It’s easy to see the potential of this stuff for every genre”

about loosing volleys of missiles at anything that moved. The ATV was one of the best instances of 3D we saw in the game – it really did look like the missile launchers bristling on the back had real depth. We didn't get to admire it long before we blew ourselves up with some overzealous trigger-work. The Na'vi portion, on the other hand, capitalised more on the race's superior athletic abilities and melee skills. Our big blue man was leaping and slashing his way around the screen, although our objective in this case was actually just a simple fetch-quest. This too was a shade workmanlike, but more than adequate. George, who's enthusiasm never waned even though it was his last demo of a long day, sporadically interjected to offer titbits regarding the weapon upgrade system (more powerful gear will be up for grabs) and various unlockable moves and abilities as we both ransacked, then frolicked, our way through this beautiful alien planet.

The latest element of *Avatar* to be revealed

new weapons and abilities. Each of the modes compliments one another; it's well designed.

Licensed games are really a dime a dozen; always have been, always will be. A handful will live on as enjoyable footnotes in the hearts and minds of gamers around the globe, and an even luckier few will snare immortal status alongside the likes of the N64s forever-lauded *GoldenEye*. Most, though, will vanish shortly after the hype from the associated film dissipates. We're not so cynical that we'd already lump *Avatar* in with the latter, just as we're not so starry-eyed we'd immediately classify it as the former. Certainly, without the 3D hoopla, *Avatar* is a fairly standard, albeit pretty, affair. Unfortunately this is how 99% of gamers will play it. However, with this new 3D tech *Avatar* is quite a stunner. It's easy to see the potential of this stuff for every genre of videogame, and we hesitate to think how impressive it'll be five years down the track should it take off.

George is realistic, however.

"I don't think it's going to take over and be the norm," he says. "I mean, not all movies are made in 3D. But it's definitely an area that a lot of television manufacturers and software producers like us are interested in."

He went on to explain that someone had to embrace this first, and it might as well be them. Ubisoft is dabbling in quite a bit of more or less unattainable tech these days, with *Avatar* being developed for 3D TVs nobody owns, and *R.U.S.E.* mostly a showcase for the US\$12,500 Microsoft Surface touch-screen computer (that nobody owns). Whether these gestures are worthwhile financially we can't say, but they do demonstrate a commitment to innovation that gamers generally appreciate. Regardless of whether you'll ever experience either of these titles in the form the developers would prefer, the fact Ubisoft is taking the risk to champion this kind of stuff bodes well for consumers who are beginning to want more. ♦

TURNING

JAPANESE



None of our time spent with Japanese giant Capcom during this year's Tokyo Game Show was actually at this year's Tokyo Game Show. *Lost Planet 2* and *Super Street Fighter IV* were being showcased in a hotel across the street, and *Dead Rising 2* was unveiled in its first playable form on the Friday evening after the non-public half of the show was done – in a crazy cowboy bar in downtown Roppongi (an area of Tokyo filled mainly with horny Japanese women, horny Nigerian strip club entrepreneurs and horny United States Navy personnel).

This is probably why Capcom's Keiji Inafune was quite comfortable writing off the entire Japanese development community in one fell swoop in front of a select group of international press – because all Capcom's good stuff had been elsewhere anyway.

Inafune asked us all for our honest opinion of what we'd seen over the past two days before sharing his own damning thoughts.

"Personally, when I looked around [at] all the different games at the TGS floor, I said, 'Man, Japan is over. We're done. Our game industry is finished,'" said Inafune to the slightly stunned crowd.

Unsurprisingly, Inafune left Capcom's range out of this blast and used them as shining examples of awesome Japanese games (despite the fact *Dead Rising 2* is actually on the hoist at Canadian-based Blue Castle Games).

Nonetheless, Capcom remains one of the best examples of a Japanese publisher that knows how to sell a variety of games in the west. Here's what's on the agenda...

SE

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Following its recent success with bringing Street Fighter into high-def 3D, Capcom has announced plans to release a console-only version of Street Fighter IV – Super Street Fighter IV. Popping out a new version of SF is a well-known M.O. of Capcom, but we must say that this latest version has a pretty tame name, by their standards. Back in the '90s you could always count on four things; death, taxes, parachute pants, and coping another version of SF with a suffix big enough to choke a donkey (like Hyper Super Street Fighter II Turbo X: The World Warrior Champion Edition Plus EX3 Alpha Rainbow).

While the handle may be modest, the planned upgrades to this follow-up are anything but. Essentially we're looking at more characters, tighter fighting, and a much needed rethink about the way online beatings get served. We were fortunate enough to square-off against producer Yoshinori Ono as he took on the local press at Tokyo Games Show.

OPS: First thing's first. In the West, we're all huge fans of Mike Haggard from *Final Fight*. In the Brawler DLC pack for SFIV we noticed

“While the handle may be modest, the planned upgrades to this follow-up are anything but”



He's no Mike Haggard...



a definite 'single pants-strap' homage to the mayor in one of Zangief's costumes – have you ever thought of bringing Mike into the Street Fighter family?

Ono-san: [before the translator can fully translate our question, he catches the phrase 'Mike Haggard' – and bursts out laughing.] Yes, I have actually thought about this before. Perhaps in the future.

OPS: Okay then, what can you tell us about these new characters... that aren't Haggard?

Ono-san: Super Street Fighter IV will feature eight additional characters, three of which I can show you here today. I am very excited to be unveiling our first Korean character in the franchise, Juri. She is a spy for Seth's S.I.N. corporation and is a deadly exponent of Tae Kwon Do – which, once again, is another first for the series.

Juri appears on screen and proceeds to kick seven shades of shit out of Blanka. From

what we can tell, she has an artificial eye that pulses purple before she goes beserk, she dresses for maximum under-boob exposure, and she can bust out vertical backflip kicks (that reminds us of Fei Long's Flame Kick).

OPS: Nice. So who else is in the new roster that doesn't run Metro City with a lead pipe?

Ono-san: These next two are probably quite familiar to you. Fans reacted negatively when we didn't include T. Hawk in SFIV, so he was a natural choice for a comeback. We also decided that it would make sense to bring back fan favourite Dee Jay as well.

OPS: Will you be making many changes to the actual fighting mechanics of the game?

Ono-san: We have been listening to feedback about SFIV, of course, and we will be making the appropriate tweaks and changes to the existing fighters, including some new ultra combos for them. We have also decided to explore having a more social multiplayer lobby.

DEAD RISING 2

There's a simple reason that *Dead Rising 2* wasn't actually being shown off at TGS proper – Capcom didn't want to. *Dead Rising 2* is ultra-violent and, in Japan, ultra-violent games need to be shown off behind closed doors in tiny rooms to tiny handfuls of people. Instead, Capcom threw an exclusive after-hours bash to showcase its new splatterfest, and OPS Australia was invited.

The singleplayer demo was a fairly straightforward affair, with new protagonist Chuck Greene loose in an American casino filled with weapons (for the purposes of giving players a brief slice of what'll be on offer). No context was given, but it's clear this demo was simply put together to allow players to kill as many zombies as possible inside 10 minutes. Kill over 300 and you'd unlock a special prize and some bonus time – but more on that shortly.

There were dozens and dozens of weapons scattered about the place – some more useful than others. There were swords that would slice enemies precisely where you cut them. A horizontal slash can do anything from lopping off a head to cutting them entirely in half through the guts – depending on where the sword strikes. A lunging downward hack will cut zombies completely in twain –

although how equal each piece is will vary. It could be straight down the centre, or it could be from shoulder. It's pretty damn accurate, and it's quite brilliant. It's a similar story for the chainsaws, just a little messier. There were a bunch of chainsaws strewn around – although the best ones were strapped to each end of a canoe paddle. With this duel chainsaw jobbie Chuck can literally wade into seas of zombies leaving a long trail of blood and bodyparts in his wake. Other weapons that caught our eyes included a belt-fed light machine gun you can

use as a stabbing device (it can even be thrown like a javelin, leaving some unfortunate zombie with a giant fish through his or her face).

Reach 300 kills and the bonus gift is a wheelchair bristling with machine guns. We don't know how or when it'll appear in the game itself, but in the demo we got to pilot it around for two minutes unleashing an endless volley of lead against the clustered hordes. It was great. The screen shook and blurred as three machine guns on full auto minced rows upon rows of the undead, and the wheelchair spoke to us as we whizzed around – like a

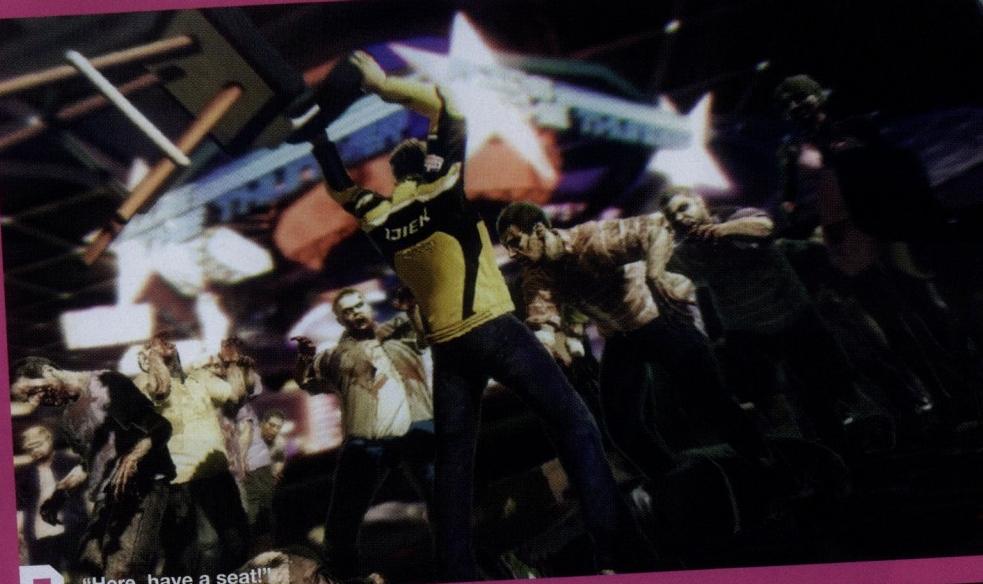




"Who ordered the fish?"



"Knife to meet you pal!"



"Here, have a seat!"

zombie Stephen Hawking.

We also noted what would be replacing the photography mini challenges of the original *Dead Rising*. While the original's Frank West concentrated on taking snaps on account of his day job as a photojournalist, Chuck Greene is just a thrillseeker, and he doesn't have a camera. Chuck's focus is cash, and plenty of it. There were a few minigames available in the hands-on demo – one of them was a grab-for-cash booth full of fluttering bills, and the other was a mechanical bull-ride. Finish these challenges and you earn money, which then goes to filling out your Prestige Points (PP). A steady flow of PP should ensure a steady flow of unlocks.

The big revelation of the night, however, was the addition of a brand-new competitive multiplayer mode. Taking the shape of a truly twisted game show, a cross between *Gladiators* and *The Running Man*, players battle it out against thousands of zombies, and each other, for maximum points and overall glory. There were four minigames on display on the night, Ramsterball (rolling around in giant steel balls activating crushers to squish zombies for points), Headache (place explosive head blenders on zombies, banking points with a

big red button), Pounds of Flesh (toss zombies onto a giant scale with a set of steel moose antlers on your head, most weight wins) and Slicycles (speed through a thick crowd of zombies on a motorcycle fitted with blades on the handlebars – most carnage wins). Up to four players are supported, and the whole thing works super. The only problems we had on the night was a bit of slowdown, and the fact that the first three games in a four game event are pretty meaningless due to the fact the last event (in this case, Slicycles) was a winner-takes-all affair. OPS made it to the final of the night's official competition after being massively trounced in Ramsterball, Headache and Pounds of Flesh because we had a blinder in Slicycles. We lost the final, and the chance to bring home an ultra-rare custom replica of the bike jacket Chuck wears in the game, but it didn't taint our opinion of the game. It's top fun, and unlike anything doing the rounds at the moment.

We're yet to see if some of the singleplayer criticisms (like a nefariously bad save system) from the original have been addressed, but we'll have more very soon. *Dead Rising 2* was the most fun we had in Japan this side of GASPARIC. Look it up.

“Reah 300 kills and the bonus gift is a wheelchair bristling with machine guns... the wheelchair spoke to us as we whizzed around - like a zombie Stephen Hawking”



LOST PLANET²

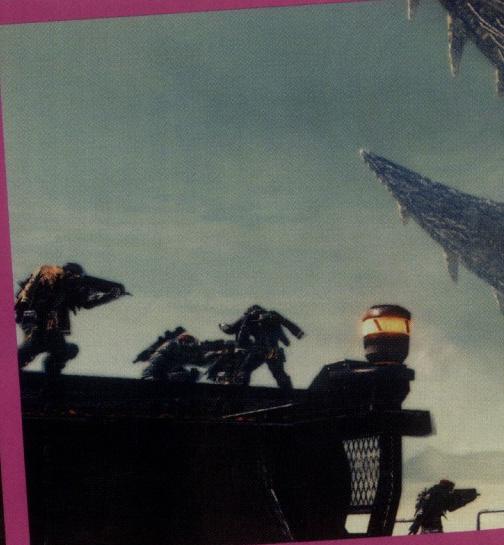
The good news is *Lost Planet 2* succeeds far more as a four-player co-op experience than a singleplayer one. The first occasion we sat down with it left us a little wanting. It was a strictly solo demo, and we felt like we were missing something.

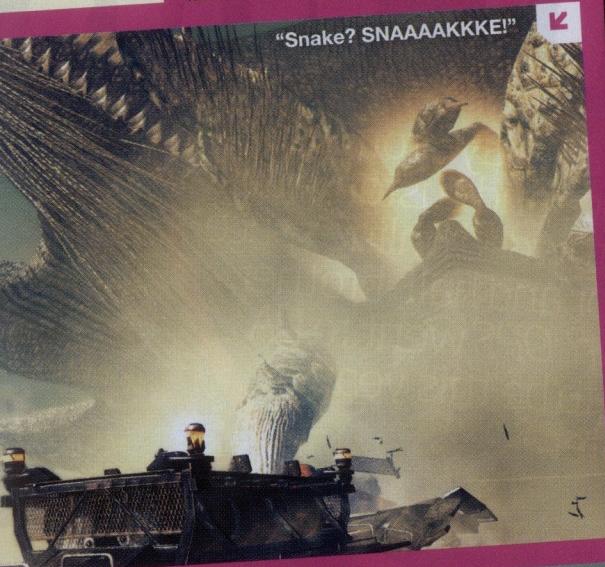
That something seems to have been three additional players. Co-op does have a habit of making even standard fare seem above average (the original *Army of Two*, perfect example) but it works quite well here.

Lost Planet 2 will see players return to E.D.N. III 10 years after the events of the first game. Leading man Wayne Holden is gone, but so is all the snow. It's melted, revealing all new environments, like jungles and deserts. The demo kicked off with a brief skirmish

in an abandoned dusty town, overrun with enemy snipers and various other grunts. We duked it out against these guys until they stopped appearing. The soldiers were replaced by two huge beasts, perched on a nearby hill ready to attack.

A nearby Capcom rep tells us these Akril creatures don't have eyes, but they use high-frequency sound waves to detect your location. The trick is not to move – like Sam Neill and that screaming girl in *Jurassic Park* when the T. rex was chowing down on that Ford Explorer – although this is often easier said than done. They charge around, and they're ludicrously quick. On a number of occasions they'll stand up on their hind legs and unleash a piercing high-pitched scream that causes





"Snake? SNAAAKKKE!"

your onscreen character to become temporarily paralysed and stumble, grabbing his ears. This gives the beasts a chance to triangulate you and attack.

All the monsters in *Lost Planet 2* have glowing orange weak points, and these bugs are no exception. These Akrid have two apiece; one on their bellies and one on their heads. Hammer these areas enough and they will go down. We did, and triggered the next part of the demo.

The second half of the hands-on was set upon a moving train. Two moving trains, in fact – hurtling across the desert beside each

best way is the hammer it with the massive cannon mounted atop the train. The catch with the cannon is that it requires multiple players to get it firing. While one player aims and fires, at least one other will need to load the gun with the nearby shells, manually. The more players you have loading the higher the rate of fire will be – although there are also rocket launchers and choppers nearby other players can use to supplement the main attack. Killing the sand worm took some time, but seemed straightforward enough. The fight itself was pretty spectacular though, mostly due to the size of the thing.

"A giant sandworm emerged... The screenshots really don't do justice to how big this thing is. It's truly colossal"

other. Once again, the Capcom rep on hand has some useful info. The trains are travelling at nearly 500 kilometres per hour – so falling off means instant death. Dying prunes 500 points off your team's shared 'Battle Gauge', and once that's drained it's game over. We find we can grapple from train to train as we fight our way to the front – a journey interrupted by encounters with other troops, mounted guns and enemy choppers along the way. You can hop into armoured suits and hijack other choppers during the battle, so the action is frantic. As we neared the front of the train the situation changed dramatically, and a giant sandworm emerged from the desert, chomping down on a series of the rear carriages. The screenshots really don't do justice to how big this thing is. It's truly colossal. Apparently there are multiple ways of defeating it, although the

It's not a bad looking game by any stretch and it seems like a good effort at this stage. If we had to criticise we'd say it still adheres to a few too many Japanese conventions (the use of the grappling hook is made more difficult than it ought to be due to a slightly gimped control system – we found we couldn't fire our grappling hook while jumping, for instance). We're also still a little concerned how it'll stand up as a singleplayer experience. During our sit-down with producer Jun Takeuchi before our hands-on, Takeuchi was quick to point out that while it's tough to balance a game to be both a compelling singleplayer and cooperative multiplayer game, he feels they've successfully been able to emulate the co-op experience with AI controlled buddies for singleplayer. Still, we'll see soon whether it'll be missing any zest when playing solo.

SHOOT TO WIN

WORDS : PAUL TAYLOR

The *Modern Warfare 2* juggernaut already promises a rollercoaster single-player experience and custom-built co-op mode. Can it compete in the crowded online space against its worshipped predecessor and half-brother, WWII zombie-mash *World At War*? OPS went to LA to play the game that's hyped to be this year's must-have shooter.



We're in trouble. Our load out is hopeless, the map – Favela – is totally unfamiliar and we're being clipped every time we poke our head out around the corner.

We're dead if we stay and die if we move. Over the in-game yells one of our team mates (some whose British accents sound very, very familiar). Two vocal players are trying to direct the rest of our eight-man squad to point A and secure the post. We make a dash for it as a teammate sends in an airstrike that erases the sniper and a few other opponents. We're about to prise open a crate that dropped when our neck is snapped from behind. We feel despondent – that's four deaths in a row, but our ineptitude is offset by one of the biggest tweaks to hit the series: Copycat Deathstreak.

"The deathstreaks are separate to perks," says Infinity Ward's Community Manager Robert Bowling. Bowling's the guy responsible for being the "conduit between our players and our dev team."

He enthusiastically explains Copycat to us. "Say some guy's kicking your ass you're like, 'Oh he must have a better class than me', which, y'know, probably isn't the case but now you can switch to his class and take his perks for the next life, so you'll re-spawn with his perks even if you don't have them unlocked."

It's a lesson learnt. This new, temporary, class is no replacement for skill, though it does mean you can peek over the shoulder

at a player with more hours of experience than you; what equipment they have and how they've customised their set-up. Some hardcore players may worry this is a reward for dying and threatens to make the playing field a touch wonky. Although Copycat is one of four deathstreaks available – we unlocked another, Painkiller, which gives a temporary boost of health post respawn while two more remained out of bounds in our hands on – there are a multitude of killstreaks that favour players overall, and their usefulness has been amped up. In the past, primary weapons could be swapped out according to preference. Infinity Ward have gone a number of steps further by giving players the chance to customise their killstreaks in the Create A Class option from the menu.

"Customising your killstreaks [is] the last staple in fully [creating] your play style," explains Bowling. "[in COD4] killstreaks were standard: you call 'em in, you leave 'em, they just did their thing and they were awesome, but now you can [alter] those. So I will load out a class based on game type and customise my killstreak to that game type."

"We evolved how Create-a-Class works," says Todd Alderman, Lead Multiplayer Designer, excitedly listing the new implementations. "There are a tonne of new weapons, new attachments, and [a] new mechanic that we added was secondary weapons. So not only do you choose your primary weapon, but you also choose your secondary weapon, which are also categorised and also have attachments."

"Another thing we added was equipment," continues Alderman. "You can swap out [the →

THE FAST FIVE WITH ROBERT BOWLING

OPS: Were there any criticisms launched at MW that you feel you've addressed?

RB: Very much so. We've added host migration to the game now, which was a huge thing in COD4. Now, say a host of a game leaves, the game doesn't end. It stops finds a new host and then immediately resumes, even if you're mid-kill. Everything resumes, you should never lose a beat. Now with host migration. Before (in MW) we didn't have that, a host would have to come in and restart, this would truly suck if you were winning.

OPS: Do you see players just going straight into the multi-side and not delving into single-player at all?

RB: There are those guys. COD4 became a juggernaut of a multiplayer game so we have built up a massive online community that will, day one, log on and start racking up on multiplayer – that's grown over the years. Before you didn't see that. People would get on, play through the single player then move over to multiplayer but I think the more we put focus on multiplayer the more people are going to buy it as a multiplayer game and they won't ever touch single-player which sucks because single-player is awesome.

OPS: Do any team-members work on single and multiplayer or are they split?

RB: On the development side we have dedicated teams; these guys are the multiplayer team; they're working on this from day one, and other guys are single-player so they're working from day one. We put just as much focus, polish and dedication to each aspect, and now this time around we have Special Ops mode, a third mode of the game, which is co-op focused, and it has missions and style completely unique to itself. When you play MW2, you see the difference [between the different modes] cause they all have their own design philosophies and what they're trying to get across to the player. Single-player is very story rich, it's a very cinematic experience, and sometimes it's slower paced. Multiplayer is a completely different beast, and that really shows that there are two separate teams dedicated to unique experiences.

OPS: What do you think the multiplayer in MW2 is going to be remembered for in this current glut of shooters that are out and coming out?

RB: Its depth, and its variety and how much there is to it. It's a goliath of a multiplayer game because we do so much focus on it from day one. I think people are going to be blown away as to how big it is and how much there is. It's fast paced, it's a very overwhelming game in the terms of just how much you have to explore. I think when people are playing it three years from now, that's what's going to put its mark on the multiplayer scene. [People will be saying] "Wow, all these new games are coming out but I'm always going back to Modern Warfare 2."

OPS: What's one thing that always puts a smile on your face every time you play multiplayer?

RB: What always makes me smile is (laughs) probably the in game stuff. The [callsign] titles that you unlock once you think you've done everything in the game; so once you're completely ranked up and you think the game's over or there's nothing else to do, the stuff you unlock, then, is what always makes me happy. 'Cause you get those people who will prestige as many times as they can do, they max out and they think the game's over and we have so much more for them after that. The titles and emblems are cool 'cause at that point you've already made your mark as a good player then it's all about vanity for you, you want to show off how good you are [past level 70].



I PREDICT A RIOT

In the hands of a team with a sound plan, the riot shield also gives the chance for a human chain to form: one person at the front, another behind with gun and grenade ready, and a third following up, ready to leap frog. Or two lots of three or four members, ready to flank. Sure, it's slow going, but we saw this implemented a couple of times in our hands-on and it was certainly a sweet accomplishment.



"We have two basic philosophies... We have to make sure it's fun, and we also make sure it's balanced"

frag grenade] and decide on what you want." The usual throwing options are covered, like semtex and throwing knives, but there's now a blast shield to wear for protection from explosions, and also 'tactical insertion': ultimately a flexible respawn point. "All these are really cool ways to customise your play style. I love using tactical insertion on CTF cause it gets me closer to the flag," says Alderman, "I constantly keep dropping it down... so I know that I can respawn without running all the way back across the map."

Alarm bells go off in our head. Won't this promote camping?

"We have two basic philosophies that we incorporated right in to the game," says Alderman. "We have to make sure it's fun, and we also make sure it's balanced. So if you see a guy that has tactical insertion you're able to go up and break it, shoot it, make it blow up, or you can wait behind it, for him to spawn and shoot him in the back. And there are always different balances that you'll see when you play the game."

That, in part, encapsulates what the multiplayer side of MW2 is all about: balance

and accessibility. It's also a game that constantly rewards and in surprising amounts. Accolades (180 to be unlocked) are dished out at the end of the match; rewards for, say, killing an entire enemy team, or launching the most airstrikes. In-game Mission Challenges, familiar to those who played the first game, also pop up once completed. Make a certain amount of headshots, or killing enemies whilst crouching, throughout your time in multiplayer and a dramatic musical sting with text will announce your magnificence.

"[In COD4] you had challenges on weapons, you completed them you got new camo schemes," reminds Bowling. "Now you complete challenges on attachments. Once you complete those you get more attachments, you get new abilities. Attachments are more than just adding a scope or a sight, you get extended magazines, you can do actual abilities that aren't physical attachments; you can increase bullet damage for example."

Consistently perform well and another new addition, callsigns, "is another way to show off how cool you are and make yourself famous," says Alderman. "It shows your [online ID], an emblem, which is a symbol, that you unlock, and you have a title... The more things you do the most, you unlock for that thing. So if you get really big at the riot shields, you're gonna unlock the riot shield emblems and the title. It's a cool way to personalise the game for yourself."

The riot shield class, Riot Control, rounds out the big additions (see 'I Predict a Riot'). Once unlocked the shield takes the spot of a primary weapon, and provides good defence against small arms fire. Lobbing a grenade over the back of a shield proves to be a sound retaliation, though the impulse to freak out and start shooting wildly takes a few moments to overcome. Switch to your secondary weapon – by default, dual-wielded sub-machine guns – swings the shield to your back, providing some cover for your spine.

This extra defence is countered by the slightly obscured view behind the shield, and it also takes two hits to knock someone else out, as opposed to the one-hit kill with other weapons. It'd be kinda hard to hold this →





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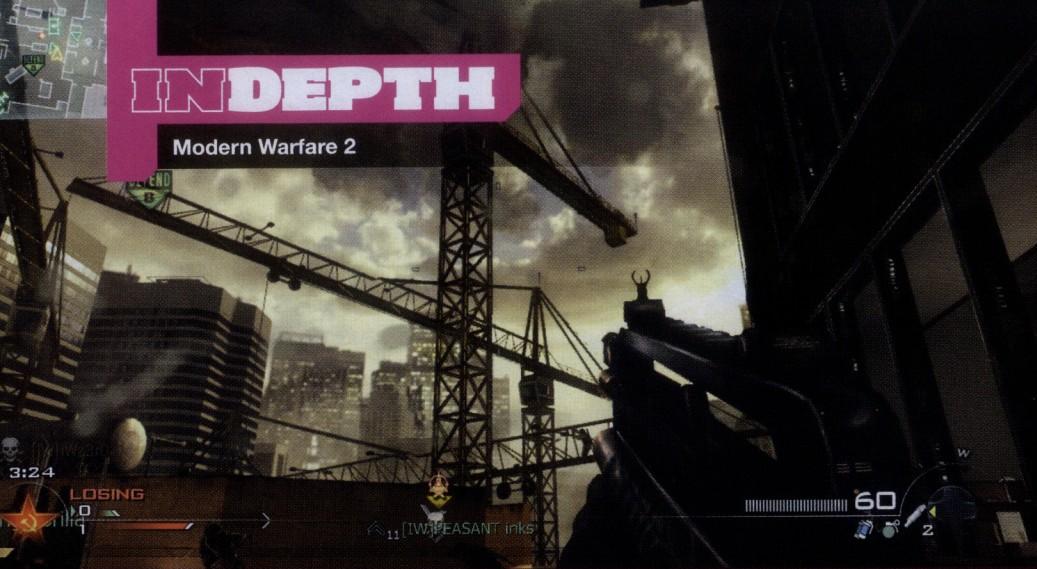
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IN DEPTH

Modern Warfare 2



portable fortress and swing a knife.

Several hours later we're doing well. We've played through the three maps (see 'map attack'). We're on to our fourth time round on the Afghan map, and have an automatic rifle with a red-dot laser sight and an SMG, defending one of the bombs in our game of Demolition. We've hunkered down in our cave and the laser sight is picking off opposing scumbags with ease. Three kills is now a snack with souped-up perks.

We bypass activating the UAV, cap another foe for our fourth, earning a supply crate drop. We set the smoke and the crate lands just outside the cave. We eagerly, quickly, scurry to it before the enemy can take it from us. "They're all weighted, so the lower killstreaks are more common," says Alderman.

"Or you might get an AC130 and start

nuking people from out of the sky."

Ours? It's a god-send: a Predator missile, equivalent of a five-kill killstreak.

It's in our inventory and we're about to activate it when we're shot. A respawn later and we still have the Predator mapped to a button on the d-pad. We stab the button, and the onscreen POV animation of our avatar unpacking the briefcase and loading up the missile seems to take an age. The view shifted to a top-down black and white birds eye of



the battlefield. Launching it meant we were exposed, but as the missile screamed towards earth, its red markers grew bigger and bigger, accelerating, and takes out two grunts on their way around the south of another territory our team had to defend.

The UAV is still selectable and we flick it on, watching the blue arrows cruise around and take on the red dots of our opponents. Match won. "We wanted to keep the heart and soul of the game familiar but wanted to make everything bigger, better more often, more accessible," says Alderman. In the short time we've had with this, fans and newcomers have a lot to look forward to.



"They're all weighted, so the lower killstreaks are more common. Or you might get an AC130 and start nuking people from out of the sky"

MAP ATTACK

OPS: Are the levels that we played [Favela, Highrise and Afghan] and those that will be in the final build in the single-player game, or have they been built from the ground up?

RB: Overall, every mode has unique locations that are to it. Some are shared but we focus on always having the player seeing something new. So, Highrise has you on a skyscraper building; that's completely unique to multiplayer. There's no location like it anywhere in any of the other modes. Multiplayer has unique locations. Spec Ops has unique locations and so does single player.



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IN DEPTH

Gran Turismo 5



EXCLUSIVE: Hands-on with *Gran Turismo 5*, and a chat with its creator,

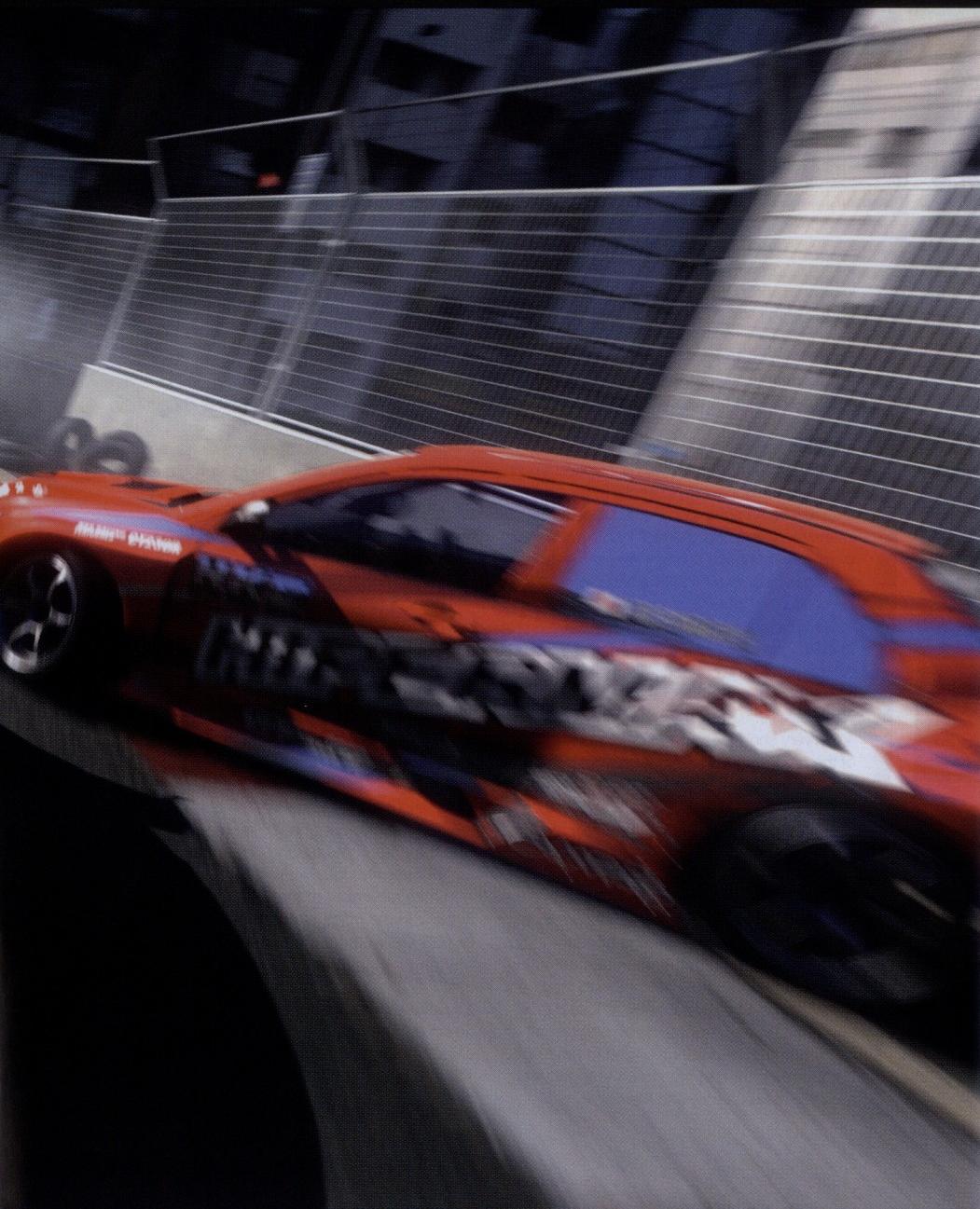




Words: Luke Reilly

G T R O U B L E

Kazunori Yamauchi, about long waits, sleeping breaks, and utes...



e assumed we'd get lost on the way to Polyphony Digital's Tokyo studio, tucked away in a non-descript corner of the city where the only landmarks are 7-Elevens. We didn't, and thus arrived embarrassingly early. As we were whiling away the time sitting by the garden out front, *Gran Turismo* godfather Kazunori Yamauchi arrived by car. Oddly enough, for a man who owns a Golf R32, a Nissan GT-R and two Ford GTs, he wasn't driving – because that car was a typical Japanese taxi. No ride is off limits for Yamauchi – not even a Toyota Crown.

Or maybe it was a Nissan Cedric. They look the same to us.

The world is full of automotive enthusiasts, but few get to create an ode to their passion as influential as *Gran Turismo*. No console racing game has had a bigger effect on the games that have followed it since the original *Gran Turismo*. A collective total of over 50 million units sold make this series the biggest banana in the bunch, no question.

It's instantly clear Yamauchi's no poser either.

"Ah, Maloo. *Top Gear*," he says at the end of our interview, stabbing at a picture of the HSV ute in one of two brochures we brought over. His translator has vanished temporarily, but we understand and nod in agreement – *Top Gear*'s Richard Hammond was thrashing a Maloo on the hugely popular BBC series a few months back. It's a pretty unique looking vehicle, but Yamauchi has obviously seen it.

Our brief but exclusive chat with Yamauchi came after a short presentation and a detailed studio tour. The presentation restated much of what had been revealed previously, and adjusted some of the facts the world had been told at gamescom a month ago. For instance, Polyphony is no longer claiming GT5 will ship with 1000 cars – but it will be over 950. The "Quarter 4 2009" release window was not entirely true either – GT5 is actually set for March 2010 now. Why this date?

"This was the shortest amount of time we needed to satisfy requirements for the scale of the game and quality of the game," says Yamauchi. ➔

IN DEPTH

Gran Turismo 5



Aside from these, however, the other information was indeed correct. There'll be 20 locations, and 70 variations of tracks to choose from. For the first time in the series there'll be moveable items on track that aren't just cones. Safety barriers and tyre walls, for instance, will scatter after hefty impacts. The game will once again be divided between Arcade and GT Mode, and it'll have splitscreen, unlike most other contemporary racing games.

YouTube functionality will be included (you'll be able to upload replays directly to the site) and there'll be an enhanced Photo Mode for those interested. Yamauchi claims it'll be equivalent to snapping shots with an eight-megapixel camera.

Gran Turismo for PSP will have some compatibility with GT5; players will be able to move cars (but not credits) from the PSP version to GT5. This will be helpful considering Yamauchi estimates that the car acquisition rate in the PSP game is roughly 10 times faster than past *Gran Turismo* titles.

A very short teaser tacked onto the end of the presentation also gave us a glimpse of night racing. This is important to Polyphony and Yamauchi ("Cars appear beautiful under lights," he says) but this night circuit is still very much a work-in-progress.

Also work-in-progress is the damage modelling – but the news on that front is positive. Unlike what we'd been led to believe previously, damage modelling will extend to *all* cars – it's just the extent that will differ. Regular cars will suffer slight deformation and scratches, and race cars will suffer the same, but be able to lose panels and doors as well. Apparently it's only taken two months to get the damage engine to this stage. It's one of the things Polyphony will be focusing most on between now and March.

With the presentation over it was time for the tour. We've been to plenty of development studios, but a lot of them look quite similar. Were it not for smatterings of concept art there generally isn't much to distinguish them from one another, and even less to really tell you what they do there. Polyphony Digital does one thing, and one thing only: racing games. That is abundantly clear, everywhere you look.

A couple of front bumpers are displayed proudly on a gantry above the reception area, next to a few boxes of rims, some tyres and various other car components. There's a seat from a Nissan GT-R in the corner. We later find out it's the seat from Yamauchi's own GT-R, but not what it's doing in the office.

Posters of the various track days Polyphony has held are pasted to a wall. The studio will rent a track for a day, blag as many cars as they can from local manufacturers and go nuts. All the crew participate. It's nice to know the team responsible for the world's premiere racing simulator regularly attempt it for real.

The server room is remarkable. It's two floors of expensive-looking boxes and cords behind glass, and it's in the middle of the office.

"Even in Tokyo it's one of the most powerful computer resources around," says Yamauchi.

It's certainly looks like it.

Quite a number of the very few staff actually in the office after a frantic lead-up to TGS are women, but the server room proudly on display illustrates a distinctly male aesthetic philosophy. Nothing is hidden away. It's like a big garage, with all the tools of trade on show. The Polyphony Digital studio is a warehouse carpeted with cluttered cubicles. There are piles of model kits, shelves full of car magazines, rows and rows of die-cast



"The feature list is just scratching the surface... there's much more that I can't talk about yet"

KAZUNORI YAMAUCHI



vehicles, cabinets packed with pamphlets – it's a huge shed full of awesome junk, and it all looks supremely conducive to crafting a truly definitive racing game.

They're a dedicated mob too. The Polyphony Digital attendance whiteboard – which indicates who's in and out, who's travelling and who's in meetings with small magnets – has a unique magnet with a bed on it. This one means you're sleeping. Under your desk.

There's a break room with some exercise equipment, an electric piano, a game set-up with *Skate 2*, *Need for Speed ProStreet* and *Colin McRae DIRT 2* scattered around, and hundreds of auto mags – but nobody is in there. There's no time to relax right now.

There are staff that keep luggage at work, in case they need to disappear overseas for an impromptu location scout. There could be staff here that don't ever really go home – we don't know. Between *GTA V*, travelling and engagements like these, Yamauchi himself hasn't had a day off all year. It's a role that comes with certain fringe benefits, but it appears to be a hectic one.

Then there are the awards – an entire wall full of them. Sales accolades, BAFTA awards and many more line shelves. There's a mounted F1 racing car piston Polyphony received as thanks from Ferrari, and there's a small mould of the Nike One concept car the shoemaker designed for *GTA IV*. The most recent inclusion, however, isn't for the *GT* series – it's a best-in-class trophy Yamauchi won while driving at a four-hour race at Germany's Nürburgring Nordschleife in August. He won the race driving a Lexus IS-F and set fastest lap among the three drivers that drove for his team. During the tour he sits down on *GTA V* briefly, on a dedicated set-up they use to

put the physics through their paces, and begins a lap of the Nürburgring, one of the world's most intimidating circuits in an IS-F. He gets about halfway around the course as he chats, via his translator, about how he found all the racing lines he used in *GTA V* were the best ones to use in real-life, on the track itself. It seems legit, because he doesn't go off once.

After a lap of the studio though it's time to sit down with the man himself. The first question is easy: why so long? *GTA V* launched with less content than *GTA IV* and went on to become the most successful *Gran Turismo* title ever. *GTA V* is the opposite – bigger and more ambitious than ever *GTA IV*; what's the motivation behind that?

"More is better," says Yamauchi, quite simply. This is game they want to make. They would've done the same with *GTA IV*, but it wasn't possible. Now it is.

So what's going on between now and March? Does it go beyond just getting the damage up and running? Yes. According to Yamauchi, damage isn't the only thing being honed between now and launch.

"The feature list is just scratching the surface," he says. "There's much more that I can't talk about yet." He covers his mouth with both hands.

So why implement damage now anyway?

"One was a technical curiosity as a developer. And the other is that if it will make for clean races, it's a good thing," says Yamauchi.

Is a livery editor and some kind of trading system on the cards, so people can create their own custom race cars?

"All possible at this stage," answers Yamauchi.

We asked him about *Top Gear Test Track* – there hasn't been a peep about that in about →



behind the wheel

We got to test the latest build of *GTA V* in the best possible circumstances, with a proper wheel and in its natural environment, but even still it's fantastic. The handling model is even more nuanced than before, and it's behaving more and more realistically the more Polyphony tweaks it. The way cars squirm under heavy brakes, and the sense of real weight, is beyond anything we've experienced before. The way cars react when they break loose is something Polyphony has worked on too, and it shows. The cockpit detail in the new cars is immense, and the animated hands and fingers move across the wheel and paddle-shift with total organic precision. We also got to see the real-time pit crews, on screen each time the car was waved out onto the track. It feels good and it looks incredible.

sooner or later

Gran Turismo 5's release date continues to confuse and confound. It's now set for March 2010 for Japan (and close to that for everyone else): "I don't think it's going to be that much later in the US and Europe," says Yamauchi. "This is based on our production schedule. The reason why the dates for the US and [European] regions are not decided yet is because their marketing is still discussing their issues. It shouldn't be too far off from [the Japanese] date for the other regions as well."

Unfortunately, this is entirely different to everything we've heard over the past year.

November 30, 2008 – A Sony executive in Europe mentions G75 will "arrive at Christmas" during an interview with a financial magazine.

June 4, 2009 – Yamauchi says they could theoretically release *Gran Turismo 5* whenever they wanted during more than one E3 interview.

August 22, 2009 – Yamauchi states that "G75 will be released shortly after [October 1]" during an interview.

August 23, 2009 – Printed material distributed at gamescom 2009 clearly indicates the game will be released during the fourth quarter of 2009.

September 24, 2009 – *Gran Turismo 5* will release in March 2010 for Japan, according to Yamauchi at the TGS press conference.

two years. Awkwardly, Yamauchi asked us how we knew about it. Perhaps it's a language barrier thing, but Polyphony wasn't aware the BBC had announced that back in October 2007.

"Yes, it's in there," says Yamauchi. He actually went for ride around the Test Track with The Stig. Nice work if you can get it.

Onto Australian cars next. We've got a very strong car culture in Australia, and the Ford versus Holden contest is almost tribal, we say.

Yamauchi nods after the word 'Holden'.

It was great to see local Fords and Holdens in G74, we continue – but can we expect more in G75?

"Yes, you will see them," says Yamauchi. It's at this point we hand over some catalogues we brought along with us. Yamauchi smiles and immediately starts flipping through the HSV brochure (procured from a young salesman who, criminally, claimed he had never heard of *Gran Turismo*. How is that possible?).

How about DLC? Can we expect fresh cars down the line?

"At this point in time, we have nothing really planned," says Yamauchi.

We press him about his favourite new inclusions, but he won't be budged into specifics.

"It's hard to choose because my favourites change," says Yamauchi. He was happy to see some of the older sports cars in G75 though.

We can't get much about the NASCAR and WRC content either, specifically about how large a part of the game they make up. Yamauchi does say they "try to do justice to them" and that they want G75 to "cover as much motorsport as possible."

So how's the team holding up? Is there a lot of pressure?

Yamauchi leans back and covers his face.

"Yes, there is a lot of pressure," admits Yamauchi. "It's been five years of hard work."

The words Yamauchi chooses to describe development are "very hard." Getting everything working in unison is hard; getting the models just right is hard. It's all worth it, but it takes resources and effort. G75 has cost more than 50 times more to develop than the original *Gran Turismo*, which also means it's been roughly 50 times more complicated.

And what's his favourite thing about G75?

"It's difficult when you're very close to a project," says Yamauchi. "But I'm most happy with the handling." They've found the more realistic they make it the easier it gets to drive well.

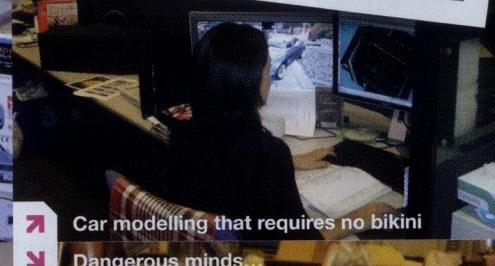
A quick photograph later and we were out on the street, negotiating our way back to TGS. It's easy to feel impatient – we do too. But we've seen the care being taken with this project. We've seen the results so far too, and they're nothing short of remarkable. Are we happy with waiting? No. But will it be worth it?

Yes.

around the studio

They have their own cool wall

Did anybody bring glue? No?



Keeping one eye on the competition!

The brochures we left in Yamauchi's hands

Car modelling that requires no bikini

Dangerous minds...



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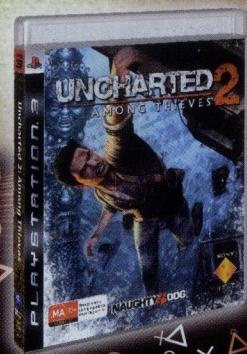
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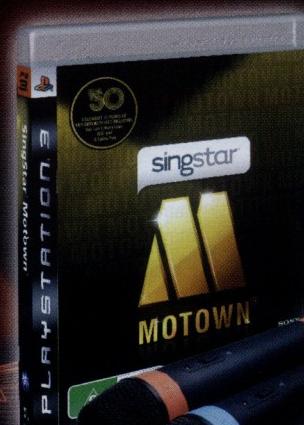
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IN REVIEW

"If God gave rock 'n roll to us then it is settled: Tim Schafer is God"

BRÜTAL LEGEND

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We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs!



REVIEW RATING

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an amazing fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible praise.

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the very best in its genre, a 9 comes with high praise.

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments, despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a bunch of moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but few will want to play a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Virtually nothing good here at all, and definitely not worth the effort of removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality.

SILVER AWARD



BRÜTAL LEGEND

It's the best rockumentary since *This is Spinal Tap*

Black Sabbath, Motörhead, Anthrax, Anvil, Judas Priest, Megadeth, Slayer, Mötley Crüe, Skid Row: if these bands turn you on then keep reading. Rock isn't dead after all, Tim Schafer has just been hoarding it all to himself as he has busied away on his next adventure. The legendary head of Double Fine Productions and mastermind behind such gaming classics as *Grim Fandango*, *Secrets of Monkey Island* and most recently, *Psychonauts*, has never let us down. With *Brütal Legend* he again proves the power of imagination and the value of sheer class: this game rocks, and rocks hard.

There's just so much to love about the concept of *Brütal Legend*. It's unapologetic in its love of metal and its desire to make broad commentaries on the state of music today and its listeners. It effectively hates on tweens and calls Fred Durst a dick while flipping two fingers at the doubters and yelling out above ear-splitting music in a voice eroded by a pack o' cigs a day and litre o' bourbon a night, "Why would you be into anything else?" This is a game where 'Mosh Pit' is a move, and an explosive guitar solo can bring packs of bored head-bangers rallying to your side as demons from hell spew forth in attack. A game where the imagery from the greatest T-shirts in metal history has become the very landscape in which you roam. A game where you can drive a hot rod deep into the bowels of Hell to ask Ozzy Osborne for some power-ups and a bunch of new abilities. If Tenacious D made a tribute to the greatest song in the world, then *Brütal Legend* is its allegory.

Speaking of Tenacious D, *Brütal Legend* stars none other than the excitable man-

hamster himself, Jack Black. He plays Eddie Riggs, the greatest roadie in the world whose dreams of taking great metal bands on the road has faded away to a pathetic existence keeping emo punks from slitting their wrists. Rescuing one of these said tossers from a stage stunt gone wrong, Eddie cuts himself and in doing so gets blood on his cursed belt buckle, unknowingly gaining the attention of the rock god Ormagöden. Said god subsequently warps Eddie to an alternative world where demons have enslaved humanity, but where his love of metal allows him to communicate – via power solos – with the ancient markers left by the world's creators, the Titans, many moons ago. Using this gift and the help of various famous and quirky friends, Eddie sets out to take down Lord Doviculus (voiced by Tim Curry... who else?) and his army of glam rockers by putting on the greatest rock show of all time.

So did you get all that? Welcome to Tim Schafer's head: frickin' awesome ain't it?

You don't see the words 'comedy adventure' much in gaming... at least not



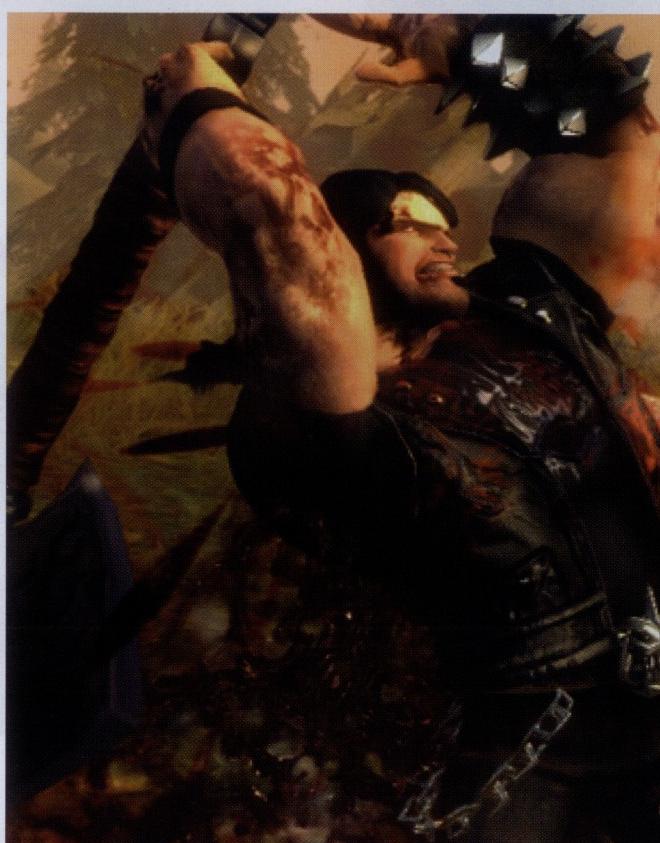
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Exit light, enter night...

MULTIPLAYER

For all the awesomeness of the single player experience, skilled gamers will romp through it in under 10 hours. Thankfully a multiplayer mode that focuses on and broadens the squad/RTS elements of the single-player gameplay joins the action and offers extended play. It's similar to your old *Warcraft III* gameplay, with four teams on the map (each with their own unique and inventive units and styles) and bases (in the form of a rock 'n' roll stage of course) which can be upgraded as you bring in resources from geysers. The idea is to build up your base and your might and then push into enemy territory. You can play an active role on the battlefield with your beat 'em up and team-up moves, but then fly up above the battlefield to play commander and order around your troops. It's a surprise direction, but deep and engaging all the same.

Speaking of Tenacious D, *Brütal Legend* stars none other than the excitable man-hamster himself, Jack Black

nowadays. But this is the niche in which Tim Schafer is Lord Emperor and you better believe that he hasn't lost his skills. Half the fun of *Brütal Legend* is just experiencing the characters. The dialogue throughout is brilliant, blending the talents of Schafer the storyteller and Black the comedian into entertainment on par with anything in multimediasphere.

The throw-away one-liners that Riggs drops throughout the experience are perfect fodder for Black's naive enthusiasm, while cut-scenes and side-characters are all given the time-of-day to make an impact. You'll snigger at least once a minute, and you'll let out a good chuckle every five.

As much a character as anything else is the demon world itself. The imagination on

display here is mesmerising. A large open-world complete with a day-night cycle, weather effects and an ecosystem of bizarre critters, its nooks and crannies are filled with eye-catching designs, places to explore and frequent 'wow' moments. Indeed, trying to drive across the land without stopping habitually to examine something, or run-down a few cretins, is futile. You're going to get side-tracked often, and that is half the fun.

Indeed, everything in the game world seems to have been built with the sole purpose of entertaining and while the graphics aren't nearly as polished or technical as an *Uncharted* or *God of War*, it still manages to be a visual spectacle on imagination alone. The art direction of the landscape is one thing, but the

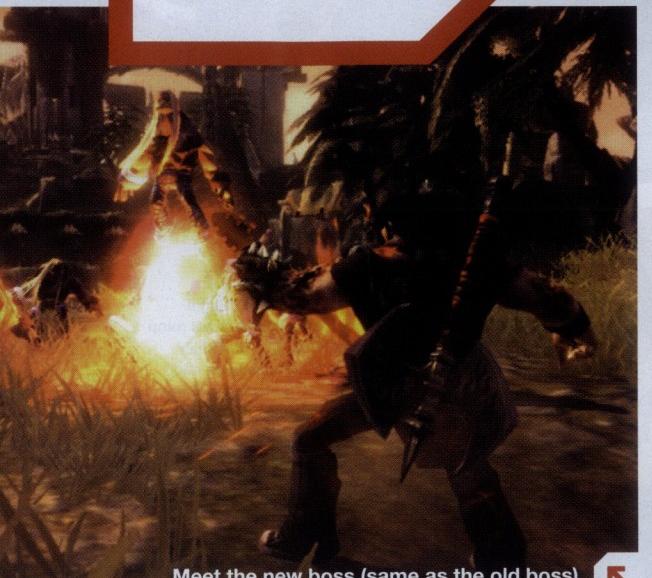
creatures, the enemies, the boss battles, the special moves – it's all got a sly smirk to it and a shrewd smile. This is Schafer's style and it's fantastic to have it back. It makes for both an engrossing adventure, and a riotous comedy and for that alone this is must-play gaming.

But *Brütal Legend* isn't just an adventure comedy; it is also an action game. And where its setting, theme and characters couldn't be more startlingly original, the gameplay is shamelessly imitative. At its core the game is like GTA... if Alice went through it. You have your open-world, and you drive about on your hot rod from A to B – complete with a radio station filled with a brilliant list of metal classics – getting distracted by the rest of the alphabet in-between: usually in the form of fighting

RIFF RAFF

It goes without saying that the soundtrack in *Brütal Legend* is stellar. Brilliant even! Here are a dozen out of the 100-odd tracks that will come rushing out of your car's stezza as you plough through hordes of demons in this strange game:

- "Back at the Funny Farm" - Motörhead
- "Battle Hymn" - Judas Priest
- "Believer" - Ozzy Osbourne
- "Children of the Grave" - Black Sabbath
- "Dawn of Battle" - Manowar
- "Deadly Sinners" - 3 Inches of Blood
- "Dr. Feelgood" - Mötley Crüe
- "Through the Fire and Flames" - DragonForce
- "Tornado of Souls" - Megadeth
- "Free Your Hate" - KMFDM
- "March of the Crabs" - Anvil
- "Master Exploder" - Tenacious D



Meet the new boss (same as the old boss) 

random bad dudes, engaging in side-quests or just exploring the weird and wonderful. However, rather than a third-person shooter, the combat unfolds as a beat 'em up (think *God of War*), with some basic squad-based ordering thrown in for good measure.

Naturally, there is nothing generic about the actual moves. Eddie's standard attack utilises a giant axe (called The Separator) to literally separate dudes from their limbs, while his secondary attack is a guitar called Clementine which when played launches magic attacks. In addition you can press both attacks simultaneously to cause a shockwave to ripple through the world. As you progress through the 50+ main and side missions you will earn Fire Tributes which can be spent in Hell to buy upgrades to your axe, bigger and better combo moves and other such goodies.

As mentioned, there is also a small excursion into squad-based territory, with you able to give your army of head-bangers basic orders (like attack, and follow me – except heaps funnier) and even join forces for devastating 'team-ups'. It kind of reminded us a little of *Overlord*. There is even a little RTS thrown in for good measure, with the larger battles asking you to collect resources (called 'fans') and to make new troops when your population stocks grow low.

Don't let the generic genre gameplay fool you though: they merge together nicely into one enjoyable experience. As an open-world game

“It deserves to be played, and to be respected”



“My rod. It's hot!”

BROWN M&MS

Remember the scene in *Wayne's World 2* where Del Preston tells the story about hunting down 1000 brown M&Ms to fill a brandy glass? Pretty much every mission and moment in *Brütal Legend* would have worked in that scene as a story told by Del in that pitch perfect 'left-my-brain-in-a-green-room-20-years-ago' voice. Such as when you need to get the thickest form of spider web from the webs of an evil eight-legged demon's lair because only it has the density to play a note powerful enough to heal the wounds of dying hot chick.

Or a man who let his hair grow so long he used it has a form of transport to fly about the world. We could go on.

Brütal Legend is well set-out, easy to navigate, packed with stuff to catch the eye and benefits from your ability to call in your car with a simple riff. And as a beat 'em up there is a rewarding progression in moves to unlock, a functional lock-on and dodge mechanic and gallons of gore. And it's not completely desolate of originality: special attacks also exist and require more complicated guitar solos that involve hitting notes *Guitar Hero* style for some rather epic benefits.

Perhaps a weakness in all this is the driving. While it seems pedantic to begrudge the handling of a vehicle in such a fantasy-set world, we still feel that more work could have gone into making The Deuce control in a more enjoyable fashion. It's just too flinchy to feel comfortable, and more accurate physics would have made the many driving moments more fun. Also sorely lacking is a jump button and a basic HUD: too often, especially in boss battles, there really is no indicator of how you are performing.

Brütal Legend's flaws, however, are totally outweighed by the sheer audacity of the project and the quality in which its vision is fulfilled. The way the action builds in intensity to mimic the growing frenzy behind and in front of the stage before a big gig is sheer genius. This

is clearly a labour of love and so wonderfully cliché, so wonderfully gory and such a fantastic celebration of everything it means to love rock and the mystique that surrounds it. It's a throwback to the adventure titles of yore, playing out with the benefits of next-generation gameplay. It deserves to be played, and to be respected. It's a long way to the top if you want to rock 'n roll, but go join Schafer and Black on the summit.  **Chris Stead**

FINAL SAY:

-  • Hilarious and engaging story
-  • Amazing heavy metal world
-  • A tad short
-  • Driving physics

VERDICT: If God gave rock 'n roll to us then it is settled: Tim Schafer is God. Must-play.

9



PlayStation
Network

FREE to join
to play

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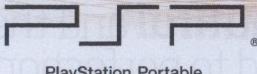
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PlayStation Portable



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**INFO**

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: FIGHTING
RELEASE: NOVEMBER
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI
PLAYERS: 1-2
PRICE: \$109.95



TEKKEN 6

Hey, does anyone even remember what we're fighting about?

To be completely honest, the fighting game is starting to look, well, a little past its use-by date. Not just *Tekken*, either, the sub-genre in general, all of them are either becoming hyper-realistic or chucking in *Star Wars* characters.

Tekken 6 is no different.

Yes, the player has a mammoth number of characters (42!) to choose from. Yes, you can upgrade and change the appearance of said characters and – as is the case with most *Tekken* games on consoles – there is an inferior, mini-game that's a bit shit. Although *Tekken Bowling* was fun.

That caveat firmly in place it has to be said that *Tekken 6* is the most stylish and approachable game in the series to date. In fact, we'll go one better. This side of *Street Fighter IV*, *Tekken 6* is the most stylish and approachable fighting game available (sorry, *Soulcalibur* – you shouldn't have taken Team Battle out!).

Some of the *Tekken* entries lost their way. Overly complicated combat manoeuvres, a dearth of new characters, predictable environments and an overall lack of polish and game options.

Clearly *Tekken 6* seeks to amend those prior

sins and make good on them. Now the combat is simplified but can still be used to pull off some amazing moves.

You also have dynamic – and stunning – environments that can be destroyed, having the characters drop down to lower levels or sewers, off the edge of cliffs – that kind of deal.

We also have lush, verdant fields where you can kick sheep high into the air, a muddy sty where pigs will fly if hit hard enough – not to mention gloriously animated violence occurring in the background of the fight and even calming pools of water and a snowy landscape. But is it enough to make a rapidly ageing style of game worth the purchase?

First up, how does the game play? Fast and furious. The animation is beautiful and the character models rendered to perfection. So you can play arcade mode, versus mode and – by dickens they did it – they re-included Team Battle.

Your humble reviewer has been a *Tekken* fan for years – the preferred mode being Team Battle. See, with a good (preferably human) opponent you set the character selection to random and go through eight rounds with eight characters.

This is a great way to use a whole bunch of different characters and learn fighting styles. Quite why some next-gen fighters would remove such an engaging option is a mystery for the ages, but it's in this one.

Just to keep things fresh, a new 'Rage' system has been added. What this does is give character's who have low health bars a shot at taking out their foe. Visually the low energy bar glows red, and red trails follow the character's moves.

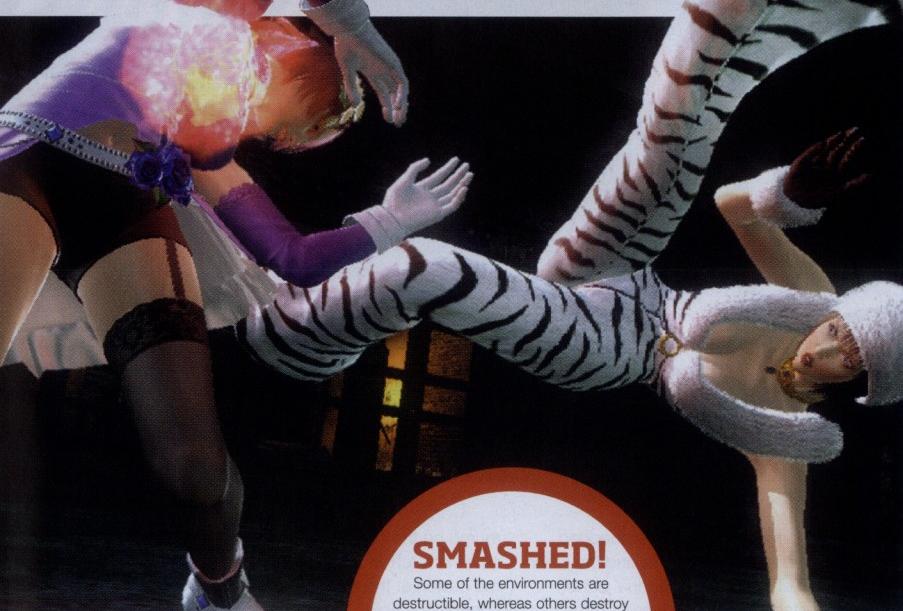
Practically this means the weaker opponent can pull off more powerful attacks. This gives the fights a sense of danger, as you can be shoving your boot up your foe's clacker for the entire fight

“The animation is beautiful and the character models rendered to perfection”



LOST THE PLOT?

Does anyone really know what's going on with *Tekken* these days, plot-wise? This one's all over the shop with shady corporations, evil doers, good doers and, yes, the bloody kangaroo and Panda. Come on guys, what do they have to do with anything?



SMASHED!

Some of the environments are destructible, whereas others destroy themselves. Check out the map with the helicopter crash that occurs shortly after the fight begins. More of this kind of stuff – and perhaps the ability to use the chopper bits as weapons – would have advanced the dusty old formula.

but if a raged-up enemy pulls of a few sweet moves it's bad news for you.

Another feature is the 'Bound' system. If certain environmental conditions are met, like breaking through a floor, your opponent will bounce off the ground, quite high, allowing you to get in there and dose them up with a hefty portion of mid-air kick/punchy.

Apart from taking your fights online there is one more addition. It's the Scenario Campaign – and is kind of like Tekken Force or Devil Within from previous adventures.

While this Campaign is really just extra goodies to fatten the package it does allow for co-op and nice twists, like using gatling guns.

If you've read this review and *Tekken 6* sounds just the thing – you're going to need to

do some prep work. First up, install the game on your PS3. The loading times between fights are a lot shorter.

Also make sure you've got some mates who are also into the game.

There's nothing lonelier than a *Tekken* player all by his or her self.

If you have at least most of those things, and *Tekken* still means "good time fighters" for you, then *Tekken 6* will make your year.

It's a beautifully put together package, has the biggest fighter roster yet and is easy to pick up and play. It certainly won't hit the world with the impact of say, *Tekken 3* – and it's not going to revolutionise the face of fighting games, but it's a bloody good time nonetheless.

– Anthony O'Connor



FINAL SAY:



- The best *Tekken* game to date, fast, furious and fun
- A roster of 42 characters with some interesting newbies



- It's still just a fighting game
- The extras are pretty lame. At least *Tekken Bowling* was funny!



VERDICT: There's nothing particularly wrong with *Tekken 6*, but the series is starting to age. Gorgeous graphics help, but this genre needs some fresh blood.

8

**INFO**

GENRE: MUSIC
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: FREESTYLE GAMES
PLAYERS: 1-2
PRICE: \$179.95

DJ HERO

Yeah boyeeee!

We approached this with scepticism. A niche in the music genre, another peripheral to own and add to the stack of guitars, drums, microphones. Turns out we should've checked our wrinkled noses at the door: this is brilliant.

You'll be well familiar with the basics: notes travel down the screen and you press buttons in time to match them. The switch from guitar to decks is easier than you think, and reasonably intuitive once DJ Grandmaster Flash – who explains things with the right amount of attitude and general helpfulness – has run you through the basics, as it's only gameplay elements that will trip you up rather than the controls themselves. The peripheral is key to the game.

Your deck controller is split up into two

sides: one with the platter that's embedded with blue, red and green buttons, and the other side with your effects dial, 'Euphoria' button and the crossfader (see 'Press my Buttons'). While having buttons on the platter breaks the illusion of having a 'real' deck, it's not an issue.

On screen, the green, red and blue streams represent the left record, sound effects/samples and right record respectively. You can disassemble the deck for a 'left hand option', and you can make it so the platter is rotated 180 degrees and the buttons are on the right-hand side. The screen adjusts accordingly so that blue becomes green and vice versa. Keep it at the default if you can, as the amount that you'll be rapidly moving the platter back and forth – scratching – is greatly aided by your

thumb on the edge of the black circle. You'll never scratch without pressing the green or red button at the same time, so your thumb controls the spin.

Your moves aren't limited to scratching, though. Grandmaster Flash goes through the full repertoire of moves in several tutorials just after you load up, both 'basic' and 'advanced' which are absolutely compulsory as there are few techniques to pick up. Mastering the crossfader is essential, as you'll frequently flick across between the tracks or even add little flourishes (see 'Icon See for Miles'), and you'll have to learn the best way to bring it back to the centre. At the higher difficulty levels your scratching often needs to be sent in to a particular direction rather than frantic wiggling, and the quick flourishes are more common.

Freestyling is attributed to the red button and the five pre-loaded samples that can be altered on the EQ dial. That EQ dial is a whammy-bar equivalent, both adding to your score and manipulating the sound.

The GH equivalent of star power, Euphoria,

"We approached this with scepticism... Turns out we should've checked our wrinkled noses at the door: this is brilliant"



PRESS MY BUTTONS

EUPHORIA BUTTON

'Star power' equivalent. Press this when it glows red to double your multiplier and take the pain out of the tricky crossfader sections.

EQ DIAL

Twiddle to select your freestyle sample and also to alter the pitch of a track in the specific gameplay section

BUTTONS

Green for left track, red for samples, blue for right track.

CROSSFADER

Flick and slide this for selecting a track in the mix or for flourishes

PLATTER

You spin and scratch with this whilst holding down one or two of the buttons

MIX MASTERS

Apart from the man who made turntables an instrument, Grandmaster Flash, there are a stack of other DJs who feature, as well as many contributing artists. Expect to see the following:

Cut Chemist, J. Period, DJ AM, DJ Grandmaster Flash, DJ Jazzy Jeff, DJ Shadow, DJ Z-Trip, The Scratch Perverts, DJ Yoda, Daft Punk

Spinning the black circle

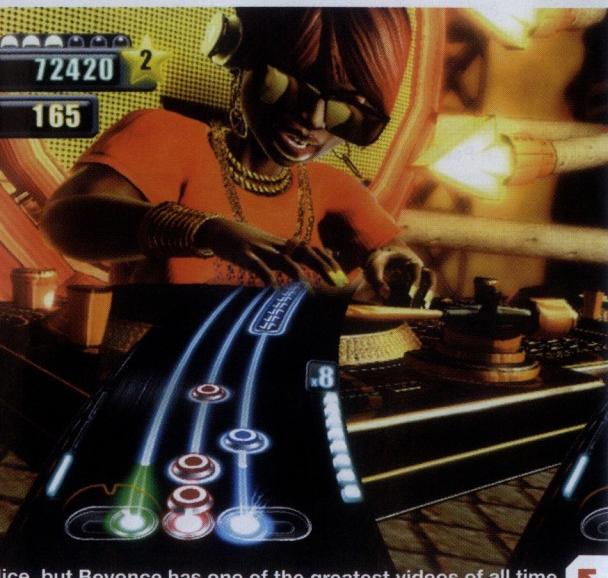
is built up by nailing buttons in a specially marked out section and executed by the specific button. Doing so increases your multiplier, but also automates the crossfader action, which is a godsend on the later tracks, and hard and expert mode. It only lasts for a certain amount of time – according to how much you've let it build up once you've earned it – and it's easy to be caught frantically snapping the crossfader around when it finishes.

Nail 50 moves in a row and you're given the chance to 'rewind' the track back a few beats by spinning the platter a full revolution. It's one of the coolest moves available as the platter has a good weight and momentum so pulling it off feels awesome, and is perfect for racking up a few more points, though be careful where you do it. Rewind to a point where your crossfader should be in a different position to where you last had it and you have only a second's grace to flip it in the right spot.

While the roster of moves is increased over *Guitar Hero*, it's no harder or easier to pick up

and play compared to its cousin, just different. Sure, both of your hands will be constantly moving as you're flicking between the tracks, or going freestyle on the sample button or EQ dial, and at times it does get damned technical. You'll be tasked with scratching and flicking the crossfader out while nailing a few samples on the red button so if you prefer to mix standing up or sitting down, just make sure you have a good grip. For anyone with a sense of rhythm and coordination, 'medium' difficulty is a reasonably straightforward path to blitz through the game, though it'll take some dedication.

Each track in the mix plays concurrently, and you'll figure out that, at its core, this is a button and movement-matching game, but having a sense of imagination helps to get in to the groove when playing through a mix. You will get a feel for the mixes, and the moments where you do scratch, slide or stab buttons make sense. Each of the mixes is unique to the game (see 'Mix Masters'), so while you may know the songs that are presented it's a brand new experience. Each mix is pre-recorded and



ICON SEE FOR MILES



BLUE, RED, GREEN
Press the corresponding button



SCRATCH GENERAL
Get your wuk-wuka on



SCRATCH DIRECTION
Spin the platter slightly in the direction illustrated.



CROSSFADE SECTION
Send the fader in the particular direction and keep it there 'till the track returns to the centre.



CROSSFADE SPIKE
Flick the fader out in the direction of the arrow



REWIND
Spin the platter back a full rotation when this is green



EUPHORIA BAR
Let it fill up and then release to take the strain out of intense fading sections.



FREESTYLE SECTION
Go nuts with the middle button and EQ dial



YELLOW LINE
Use the EQ dial to alter the tone of that particular track.

"My finger points..."



"I've got that"



Despite its minor follies, this is an excellent game



though we haven't had opportunity to test that at time of going to print. However, jack in a compatible guitar and you and a mate can play together. Honestly, the tracks we have tried this out on feel a bit weak. The guitar streams are kinda boring, but your progress with a human counterpart counts towards your overall star total. You'll come across a few guitar and decks tracks as you progress through single player and the AI will fill in on the guitar side.

What does feel like a wasted opportunity is the chance to do a decks and drums combo – Travis Barker and DJ AM style. The game feels too complete to have this added in via DLC so it's something to consider for DJ Hero 2.

Overall, this is a fantastic game. We're especially pleased that the deck feels robust – the platter has just the right amount of weight and inertia when spun – though we wish that the crossfader either had more of a definite center or would 'snap back' to the neutral position, as it's easy to overshoot the mark and flick it all the way to the opposite side when you're being enthusiastic. Despite its minor follies, this is an excellent game, perfect for party play, perfect for playing when you're feeling glum. Yes, it means another peripheral, but this belongs in every music fan's collection.

► Paul Taylor

set in stone, so there's no chance of mashing together the in-game tracks into your own mega-mix.

There's loads to unlock and it's all achieved by earning stars: hit the 'notes', slide and scratch in time and new characters – including Flash and DJ Jazzy Jeff – decks, skins, will open up according to how well you do in each set list. Ultimately, however, it's all cosmetic.

Graphics are functional, occasionally disorienting as the on-screen record spins and the background is a neural explosion of lights and pinning characters. The crowd, disappointingly, is pretty blocky and jaggy. Each DJ has a lot of personality, which you'd expect at this stage in the franchise. The arenas you play in grow bigger as you progress, but you'll be too lost in the moment to really care about what's going on in the background.

Beyond single player you can plug in another set of decks for two-player games,

FINAL SAY:



- Exceptional selection of mixes
- Accessible gameplay
- Great feeling deck



- Average background graphics

VERDICT: A surprise package, impossible to write-off as a gimmick: utterly and totally addictive.

9

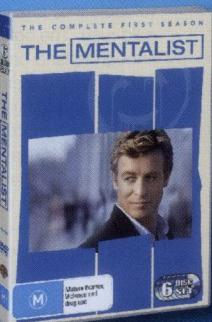
FROM J.J. ABRAMS, ALEX KURTZMAN & ROBERTO ORCI

"A paranoid thriller...
the best new series to emerge..."

- Tom Glatto, PEOPLE



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**INFO**

GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: \$99.95

There's never been a game quite like *Borderlands*. Don't get us wrong; it liberally, and openly, cribs elements from other games and movies, but the way it combines them is unique, epic and seriously... just freakin' sweet.

First impressions of this mammoth title are likely to be wrong. It looks like a plain shooter. A shooter with funky, pseudo cel-shaded graphics. Actually, that wouldn't have been a bad game – but *Borderlands* is that and so very much more. Let's take a step back and lay some plot on ya'll.

In the distant future, humans are spreading across the universe like a crotch rash, colonising planets and taking everything valuable they can find. It's like an intergalactic gold rush. The colonists who are unfortunate enough to land on Pandora, searching for a better life, find a strange, desolate world. A lawless land that offers little of interest... aside from some apparently abandoned alien ruins.

Those who have the coin shoot back into space, leaving the remaining population to go bull-goose loony, start dressing like S&M freaks and generally making an already pretty ugly planet an absolute hole.





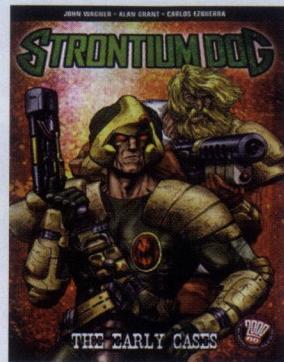
"Pandora is a horror movie of a planet"

Bullets should extinguish that fire

Roadkill!

THE DOGS OF WAR?

It's hard to describe the visual style of *Borderlands*, and really the screen grabs speak for themselves, but some of the landscapes seemed familiar. Check out *Strontium Dog* (a comic strip from Brit weekly 2000AD) - it's about a bloke with powers who is sort of an intergalactic bounty hunter. He's also a costume for LBP in their 2000AD pack.



RPG with elements of a shooter, *Borderlands* is a shooter with elements of an RPG.

We're not just talking about the ability to score critical hits here, the sheer depth of the levelling up for your character is astounding. Each one of the four classes has a special move. The Hunter sends his bird... thingy named Bloodwing to attack, The Soldier spawns an automatic gun turret, The Siren can phase walk, slipping in and out of space/time to get in a better position for combat and The Brawler goes into a berserker fury, pummelling all foes with his fat, Shetland pony-sized fists.

So that's your four basic classes. But each class has three tiers you can go down – the skill trees can be upgraded as you level up. Now you could level up evenly or choose to focus on one of the tiers. The Hunter, for instance, has Sniper, Rogue and Gunslinger as his three potential identities.

If this is starting to sound complicated and dull, fear not. Even an RPG virgin will find the levelling up extremely intuitive. Especially as your character becomes more powerful.

At the start of the game you'll be on foot and relatively weak. The vicious little mongrel skags – charming carnivores of varying sizes – will present a problem, and the raiders – mad bastards, often masked, mutant midgets or hulking "badass" class enemies – will frequently gang up on you.

However, after a few hours of getting used to the 16-million plus weapons and learning how to best use your powers – adding elemental effects to deal extra damage – you'll slip into a rhythm. It takes a few hours but once you unlock the vehicles the game really picks up pace and takes off.

As if this wasn't bad enough, the seasons, running on very different cycles to those back on Earth, have changed into the Pandora equivalent of Spring – and this is where Pandora turns from a moody strumpet of a planet to an outright bitch-world.

All manner of unfriendly flora and fauna springs up, digesting colonists, stealing food and defecating on essential, life-sustaining technology.

Put simply: Pandora is a horror movie of a planet.

Oh sure, there are some, likely false, rumours of an alien vault that contains incalculable riches – but the people who discovered the vault were destroyed, leaving

only an audio beacon that gives no clue as to the vault's location. Basically you'd have to be greedy and deranged to even want to go to Pandora. And thus enters our four characters.

Yes, that's right – all four of the character classes, comprising Mordecai (The Hunter), Roland (The Soldier), Lilith (The Siren) and Brick (The Brawler) – are quite obviously greedy and unarguably insane.

Score a critical hit on one of your enemies, blowing off limbs or the head and your character will chuckle or ask for "Blood! More Blood!"

Nothing we've said so far really distinguishes *Borderlands* from other sci-fi shooters. However, in the way *Fallout 3* was an

RANDOM PANTS!

One of the most exciting parts of *Borderlands* is the fact the weapons, and to a lesser extent some of the enemy camps and such, spawn randomly. Handguns that shoot shotgun shells, grenades that teleport to their target and shield destroying electro-shock sniper rifles are just a taste – get ready for a whole lot of new and interesting ways to make things die!

Pointing a gun: you're doing it wrong



After meeting various characters scattered through your initial landscape you'll notice that there are a whole lot of missions. Some are easy, some are trivial, some are normal and some are punishing. They range from removing the human skulls from a bandit camp, chasing down a violent, homicidal freak (usually by being the *more* homicidal freak) and soon the ground will be thick with comic book-style blood and guts.

Doing missions gets you money, money gets you weapons and shields, weapons and shields help you on your ultimate quest. Of course during all these missions your XP is increasing and soon you'll find yourself being the baddest melon farmer in that sector of Pandora.

It's almost eerie, but anytime you start to find things getting a bit repetitive – bam! – an extra element is added to the game. The first element is the vehicle. It takes a little while to get used to the controls (and frankly it would have been nice to have some more destructible environments that you could tear-apart through) but soon you'll be spawning vehicles like a pro. Just as that starts to get predictable you'll open up the game with the New-U stations. These are essentially checkpoints but once you bring the network back online you can teleport to any New-U station you've visited before – and then the game opens up to a whole new level.

We often stress the importance of co-op gameplay. Especially offline co-op gameplay. It's criminal that some games don't have it. Happily *Borderlands* not only has it but is the most enjoyable and well implemented co-op we've ever seen.

Not only is it fun playing with a mate but it hits just the right mechanic.

Traditionally co-op in RPGs can get quite



The Go-Go Ray was a hit at the monster mash



“It’s the kind of game where you pause, hoot like loons, fist bump one another and blabber about what just happened until the next cool moment.”

“IT’S KINDA LIKE MAD MAX BUT IN SPACE, UM...”

Okay, we reckon *Borderlands* is *Indiana Jones* set in a *Mad Max* universe but in space with a bit of *Star Wars* (the good ones), *Aliens* and even *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* thrown in for good measure.

narky as people will argue that one person's hogging all the dosh and so forth.

With *Borderlands* all money found is split evenly, XP are split so neither character levels up to ludicrous heights before their partner, leaving you and your brother in arms to argue about who takes the corrosive rocket launcher and who'll nab the incendiary sniper rifle – something you can settle with a duel.

There's also a really anarchic spirit to the game, a general iconoclastic tone that makes the square-jawed heroes from other shooters and even the tree-hugging, "I need to find my daddy" narrative of *Fallout 3* seem kinda of passé.

Borderlands' interaction with characters is fast and furious, usually along the lines of talking to some inbred, intergalactic hick. There are some genuinely laugh-out-loud moments of comedy in the script but even more exciting are the ways you can pull off destructive, jaw-dropping moves without getting a cut-scene to show you what you did – you damn well did it yourself.

An example was during a co-op game. One of us played The Siren, the other The Brawler, where some rude-headed bandit was laying down some fire from a mounted gun.

After dying a few too many times a completely illogical and almost certainly fatal plan was employed. The Brawler would draw the mutie's fire while The Siren phase walked behind him, using the ability to cause an explosion when reappearing. Meanwhile the Brawler would go berko and punch the bandit into paste.

With diminishing ammo and a terrible feeling that we'd not levelled up enough, the plan was implemented. The bandit almost had the Brawler dead in seconds. Happily The Siren was in place and set off a corrosive explosion. This distracted the bandit who was slowly melting and screaming in agony. The last thing he saw before going to video game baddie Hell was the berserk Brawler quite literally punching his head off.

It's the kind of game where you pause, hoot like loons, fist bump one another and blabber about what just happened until the next cool moment.

Borderlands only narrowly misses out on the big 10, and the reasons are forgivable but, unfortunately, noticeable. The frame rate, especially in co-op, will occasionally lag. It's not horrible but it's there. Other than that, your inventory can fill up a tad swiftly for our liking,

but again that's not a deal breaker.

Ultimately *Borderlands* is a ballsy, brash, utterly engaging title. It looks like an underground comic book, plays like a shooter with the depth of an RPG and lets you decide how the adventure will play out. There are hundreds of missions, an engaging, hostile landscape full of monsters, mutants and cute robots – plus appealing multiplayer options and, of course, the wonderful co-op – including duel mode. As much as we dig *Brothers in Arms*, *Borderlands* is the game Gearbox was destined to make.

Borderlands starts out great and only gets better from there. If you're up for an epic, awesome and subversive good time, get your arse to Pandora and explore the *Borderlands*.

► Anthony O'Connor

FINAL SAY:

- It takes the best elements of RPG and shooter and fuses them
- Quite simply the most rewarding co-op to date
- Frame rate issues are irksome during firefights
- Vehicle controls are a tad squirrely

VERDICT: A sprawling, galactic Western/adventure/treasure hunt with a glut of uniquely twisted touches. An absolute ripper of a game.

9



HOTCAKES

Along with *Madden*, the *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw* franchise is the highest selling sports sim in the United States, although the numbers are not even in the same ballpark down under. In Yuke's defence, that's mostly because Aussies are much more interested in real sports. Zing!

WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2010

Can you dig it, sucka?

Here's something we never thought we'd say: bringing in some realism via the bone crunching UFC (*UFC 2009 Undisputed*, to be precise) has helped bring more substance to the WWE. We just blew our minds. But think about it. If Yuke's Media Creations, purveyors of all things wrestley for nigh on a decade now, hadn't taken the side route and worked on the superb engine for its other title (and fine tuned that sucker to the max), what you might be looking at is another mere rehashing of one massive selling, albeit stagnant franchise, as opposed to a truly complete wrestling entertainment package.

We ain't kidding either; the similarities are striking. From the moment you get past the

loading screen, the WWE training ring looks exactly like the one in *UFC 2009* (minus all the Pay Per View paraphernalia) and the training scenario potters along like its simplified twin brother. We like it. There's a lot of ground to cover and the wrestling game is oft confused with a mindless button basher, but that simply isn't the case. Though lacking the subtle depth shown in *UFC 2009*, it makes up for it with accessibility, moxie, and pure unbridled showmanship – and that's where this latest incarnation really begins to shine.

The Big Show. Nope, not the wrestler, the WWE media juggernaut that rolls through cities in the United States leaving screaming fans, hoarse throats, broken hearts and empty wallets in its wake. There are about 8,000 weekly gigs on its roster at last count (that may be exaggerated), which is big business for the clan McMahon and as such deserves a certain amount of fanfare, pomp and ceremony. That may be great for the live experience, but sorely lacking for the interactive one. That's all about to change. You may have heard us bang on about the wealth of customisation, but this well runs deep.

You can tweak anything. Anything. From

logos on the clothes, the gear itself, make up, body type, facial features, entrance music, fireworks, timing, moulding your character's back story, camera angles, how you make your way through the ropes, ten combination finishing moves, the whole shebang baby, and if you've got the inclination, record away and throw it up online and see what the rest of the world thinks. This is a deliberate strategy to satisfy the obsessed fans, promote some serious user-based content and helps to create the maximum longevity. We saw how well that worked out for *LittleBigPlanet*, and that was an imperfect model, at best.

You could (and we continue to) spend hours just perfecting your 30 second intro to enter the ring, upload away and then jump right in and start up again. We simply can't wait to see what gets posted with equal parts excitement and trepidation. This is one of newer aspects to ramp up the 'entertainment' aspect of the WWE. We have to give them a pat on the back for embracing it.

The other more random, yet even more unbelievable slant, is the 'rival' mechanic. As you trapse about your road to glory you'll be able to set up to five allies and five rivals, varying in intensity. Once complete this randomly generates

INFO

GENRE: SPORTS
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
DEVELOPER: YUKE'S MEDIA CREATIONS
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: \$109.95





Tights under your sumo undies... lame

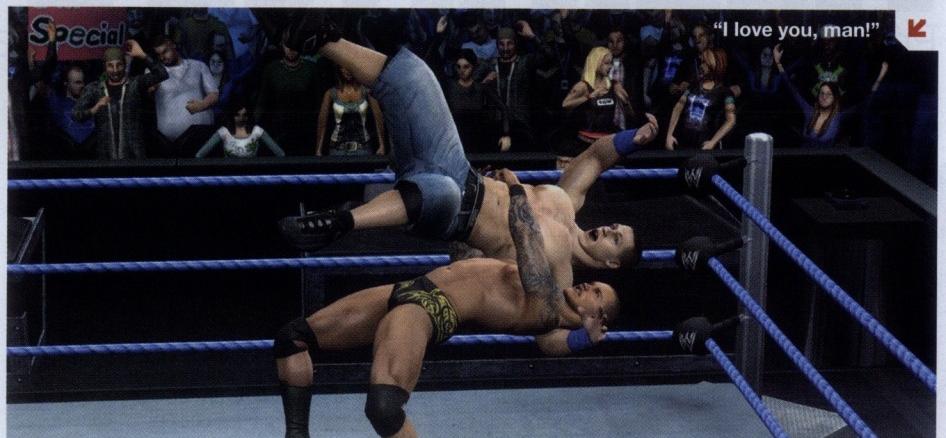
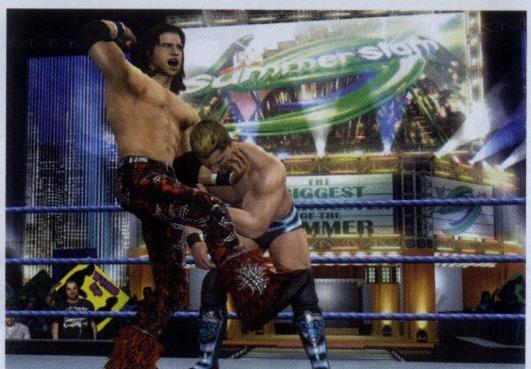
THE LEMANSKY

As we mentioned, there's a *ridiculously* deep create-a-wrestler mode, which we're positive everyone will use to manufacture some wild, woolly, sexed-up and messed-up characters, but we're taking a different path. We offer a virtual beer and super speed high-five to anyone who comes up with a Det. Curtis "Lem" Lemansky of *The Shield* TV show fame. He deserves to be immortalised and we could think of no greater stage. His abnormally spiked hair, wife-beater

and flannel combo coupled with the permanent "douche" face is begging for the WWE treatment. So who's up for it?



"An impressively layered experience stuffed to the gills with content"



seemingly unscripted responses to various scenarios. Like you may have a rival storm the ring as you're just about to pin someone, and drag you off before the three count, or have an ally come bounding to your aid with a chair if you're getting double teamed, and are in desperate need of assistance. The beauty is that there's no way of knowing what or when it's going to happen, and really hammers home the more theatrical component of the experience.

As far as the gameplay goes, there should be no surprises for veterans, though there has been some tinkering under the hood. Playable/creatable Divas are a new addition to the fold and bring some much-needed femininity to the party, though no cross gender match ups are allowed. Gone the way of the dodo are the HUD displays, replaced by a momentum bar that can quickly turn the tide in your favour. Quick time events are the order of the day with \square taps to dodge, \otimes to connect on the fly, R3 to pin or pull a submission hold and the remaining face buttons to unleash a variety of punches, kicks and bitch slaps. There are also all manner of double and triple team moves contextually triggered in the larger scale match ups. What we really enjoyed were the

variety of Signature and Finishing Moves that were character and positioning specific. You just gotta be in the right place at the right time boyo.

What else can we say? There's every type of match you can think of, with everyone on the roster (new and old school), in every type of arena, with any winning conditions you'd like, on any of the programs. That alone is a staggering amount of diversity. Throw in the over-the-top theatrics and you've got an impressively layered experience stuffed to the gills with content.

We would've liked to have seen marginally better visuals and a bit more range to the fisticuffs themselves, but that's really Yuke's own fault for showing us exactly what it could do with *UFC 2009*. Mesh the two games together and this series really would be a force to be reckoned with.

— Dave Kozicki

FINAL SAY:



- Customise just about anything
- The definitive WWE experience, not just the wrestling



- Could look prettier
- Needs more wrestling moves

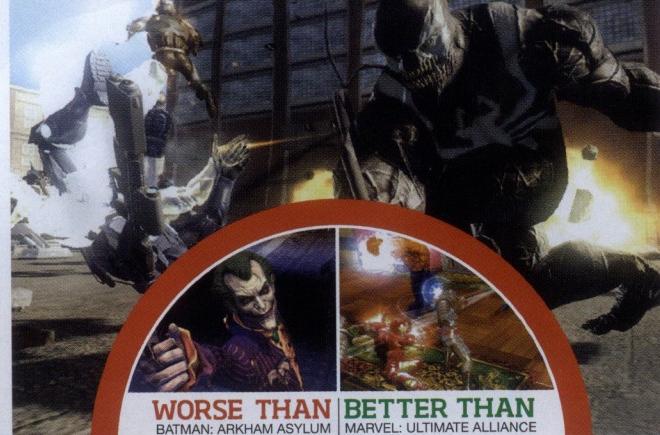
VERDICT: The amount of content you'll reap from the create-a-wrestler alone will astound. If WWE's your thing, welcome to nirvana.

8

Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2



"My hammer should take care of your exploding crotch"



WORSE THAN BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM **BETTER THAN** MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE

INFO

GENRE: RPG
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: VICARIOUS VISIONS
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: \$99.95



"Special move: blinding fart"

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 2

From a Secret Invasion to a Civil War - heroes and villains unite

The original *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* was an extremely entertaining superhero brawling, RPG-ish dungeon crawler. It suffered a bit from an overly complicated upgrading system and some of the worst voice acting ever to damage a comic book fan's ears, but the four-player co-op and the game's significant length made it an enjoyable, if patchy, adventure.

MUA2 improves on many of the dodgy areas of the original. This time around the graphics are superb (if small in some areas) and the plot feels less like random snippets culled from a comic book nerd's collection.

The two main stories that went into the writing of this game are The Secret War – where Nick Fury invades Latveria in an unsanctioned attack on foreign soil and The Civil War storyline.

The Secret War bites Fury on the arse and, due to a catastrophic event involving a bunch of capes, a Superhuman Registration Act is put on the political agenda.

If this sounds dull, it's really not. In fact the plot is one of the strongest aspects to the game. At a point you have to decide to be pro or anti-registration – effectively giving the game at least two play throughs (as you'll face different bosses, have access to different characters and so on).

Missing are the numerous powers

each hero had in *MUA*. This time around they only get four each, however as the powers are upgraded they change. Deadpool for instance (a bit of a star in this game) has a gun attack. Levelled up the bullets explode causing much more damage.

This will probably prove divisive for fans as even four changing powers is still just four powers. That's where fusion comes in.

Fusion moves are when two characters join together for a super special move.

Hulk can twirl Spider-Man around, Venom and Thing can jump up and down knocking everyone off their feet and Gambit can throw his deadly cards into a moveable cyclone of Storm's creation. Some of these moves get a bit samey – after all there's only so many ways to team up these guys.

However, if you're even a casual comic book fan (we know hardcore types have already played through this, like, five times) the plot will intrigue and grip you. It goes beyond the Civil War into stranger areas... yet manages to seem grounded and logical, unlike the original.

MUA2 has proven to be worth the wait. However, some things that were great about the original are notably absent: the single-player comic book missions, the multiple outfits for the heroes, though the streamlined upgrading and extremely pretty graphics make this very tidy. If DLC becomes available – for new characters and levels – it could be even better.

Anthony O'Connor

RED MENACE

We were going to mention Stan Lee's cameo in the game but as everyone seems to be gagging for Hulk, here's a gander at his secondary "costume". Red Hulk (aka: "Rulk") is just a big meanie.

HEROES UNBOUND!

Many characters are unlocked by beating or assisting them, though you'll need to find five gamma regulators for Hulk, Jean Grey needs five M'Kraan Shards and Thor requires five Asgardian Runes. It sounds painful but replay levels to find any you may have missed.

Also, don't rush through the levels – they're packed with surprises.

FINAL SAY:

- Great looking characters, de-structible environments
- Hulk, Venom, Green Goblin, Gambit - gotta love these guys

- Could have been a bit longer
- Unless you have a few mates playing it can get very repetitive

VERDICT: *MUA 2* is a compelling superhero romp, though the button mashing nature of play needs updating. Still, it's an absolute hoot and beautiful to look at.

7



WORSE THAN BEING A NINJA | **BETTER THAN** BEVERLEY HILLS NINJA



NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA 2

Go ninja, go ninja, go! Ninja, ninja... RAP!

If there's one thing we can say about the *Ninja Gaiden* series it's this: it's one serious commitment. It doesn't matter who you are, or how decent or great a gamer you are, it's going to test your abilities, frustration level and the strength of your TV screen vs. controller, remote or fist. Many titles have incurred our wrath over the years during time trials, hardest difficulty missions and survival modes, but none have let loose such a glorious plethora, such a stunning array of curses, that questioned its relative parentage, the nature of its relationship to its mother and even its sexual orientation, as *Ninja Gaiden*. It's just that type of game. It should not be undertaken lightly, even on the easiest of difficulties.

The storyline is absolute tripe in this third-person action extravaganza, and that's being generous. After 50 or so utterings of variations on "fiend", "archfiend" and "overfiend", fighting evil ninjas, towering fat guys and every type of demonic entity you can pitch a shuriken at, you'll very much want less with the talky and more with the stabby, and *Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2* has certainly got you covered. As Ryu Hayabusa from the now dead *Dead or Alive* series you're the ultimate badass mofo, and you feel like it. He's got a PhD in killology, and you'll test your resolve to take to these evil sons o'bitches and make them pay.

You'll slice and dice, duck, dodge and dive your way through countless minions

on your linear path to defeat the demonic overfiend. At its core it's basically a reboot of *Ninja Gaiden 2* with the kinks knocked out and with the bonus bells and whistles, like playable female co-stars and an extremely basic co-op mode, but sadly all the gratuitous gore and blood has been left by the wayside. The central gameplay hasn't changed all that much. You'll need to vary your attacks and defend like a mother against even the most common of adversaries. Mixing it up between heavy and light attacks whilst maintaining an almost constant state of blocking keeps your fingers nimble, as well as dashing, leaping and bringing the pain, tossing throwing stars, and did we mention about blocking?

Weapon diversity is the icing on the cake with talon claws, tipped nunchaku, a katana for up close and personal, as well as a dual katana combo, staff and one freakin' huge scythe for heavier "at arm's reach" type manoeuvres. Whatever your flavour, Hayabusa's got the tools of the trade: are you ballsy enough to take the job on? **Dave Kozicki**



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
DEVELOPER: TECMO
PLAYERS: 1-2
PRICE: \$109.95



MY MILKSHAKE BRINGS ALL THE BOYS TO THE YARD...

A bonus, unique, wondrous, inspirational, amazing school of thought invaded the Team Ninja collective when they decided to bring a couple of *DOA* inspired playable characters into the mix. With this cavalcade of eye searing hotness, they allow you to harness the most devastating, debilitating and disarming weaponry in their arsenal... their chesticles. At certain times you'll get a hands on experience, giving you full control over each breast's movement wagging the joystick (no joke). We don't know why they did it, or to what end, but after you take them for a spin the whole experience leaves you feeling cheap and dirty somehow...



FINAL SAY:

- Unbelievable action
- Bloody hard
- Blood cut out
- Some sparse level design in areas

VERDICT: Even though the lashings of blood have been removed, it's still a sexy and rock-hard title.

8

The Kalinka: you're doing it wrong

WORSE THAN BETTER THAN
FIFA 10 | PES 2009**INFO**

GENRE: SPORTS
RELEASE: OCTOBER
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI
DEVELOPER: KONAMI
PLAYERS: 1-10
PRICE: \$109.95

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2010

Has it actually evolved?



It's funny... and not 'ha ha' funny... that *Pro Evolution Soccer* has been unable to evolve much this generation of gaming. Whilst the once hapless *FIFA* has come on in leaps and bounds to become, as of last year, the premier soccer simulation, the once untouchable *PES* has been relegated to waterboy

status, passing out boring old H2O with a jerky frame-rate to boot. And as we all know, water sucks. It really, really sucks. So as of 2010, can *PES* get us on the Gatorade?

Thankfully, with *PES 2010* the series' diehard fans will start to see some genuine movement forward. Visually the game is far superior to the previous versions. Everything looks schmick with high-res textures, diverse animations, genuinely recognisable players, some great time-of-day effects and – best of all – not a frame-rate issue to be seen. That last point alone

makes the experience so much more enjoyable than the previous iterations and it is also worth noting that the replay function – aka the 'rub-it-in' mode – is back to its brilliant best.

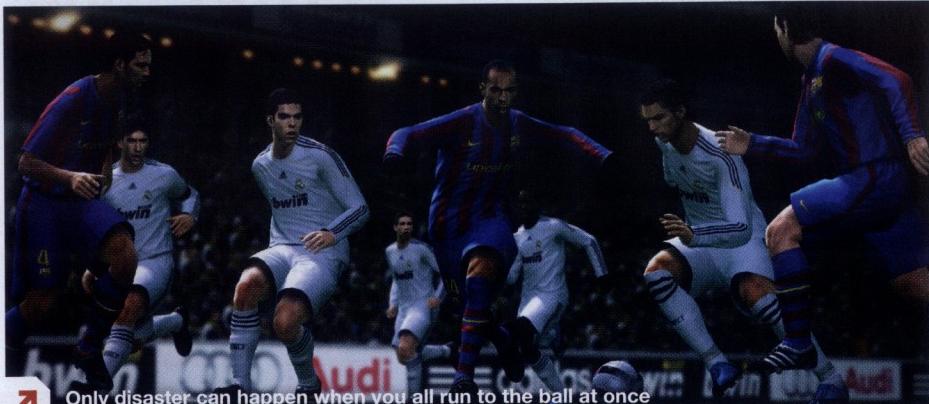
PES struggles to match the license-a-thon which is *FIFA*, and fans of smaller comps like the A-League or real team names will be disappointed. But that doesn't stop it from offering plenty of diversity. You can compete in the UEFA Champions League (which is a nice coup), League Cups, Master League, Become a Legend and a revamped Online mode blessed with all new networking code. Master League, as usual, is an epic managerial experience and we found it better visualised this year to be more welcoming to new gamers. Become a Legend is the over-the-shoulder third-person experience where you take one player from gimp to god. It's a great diversion, but suffers from poor camera panning, and a general lack of organisation when compared to *FIFA*'s pioneering Be a Pro mode.

Where *PES* trumps *FIFA* is in its tactical

depth. This year it's bordering on ludicrous just how in-depth you can manipulate the way your team plays. Using slide-bars you can tweak pages worth of tactical options that drastically open up the experience for mates jostling on the couch. Improvements to the gameplay are more subtle: there's a range of new attacking moves adding depth for the skilled gamer, and a slightly weightier feeling to the players (especially as they turn) which requires smarter management of the sprint button. Unfortunately shocking collision detection really lets the game down as players often run through each other.

The reality is, however, that the gameplay remains rooted in the quick, frantic football that doesn't quite reflect the agility of the real game as seen in *FIFA*. *PES* is easier to master, and then offers tactical depth, which makes it perfect for two mates playing on the same couch. If that is your goal, then believe in the improved frame-rate rehydrating the winning gameplay.

– Chris Stead



Only disaster can happen when you all run to the ball at once

FINAL SAY:

- Frame rate no longer an issue
- Master League still the bomb

- Poor collision detection
- Not as classy as *FIFA*

VERDICT: Finally possesses sound gameplay thanks to the solid frame-rate to be and massive tactical depth.

8

**INFO**

GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: \$109.95



"We'll never win with soldiers this green!"

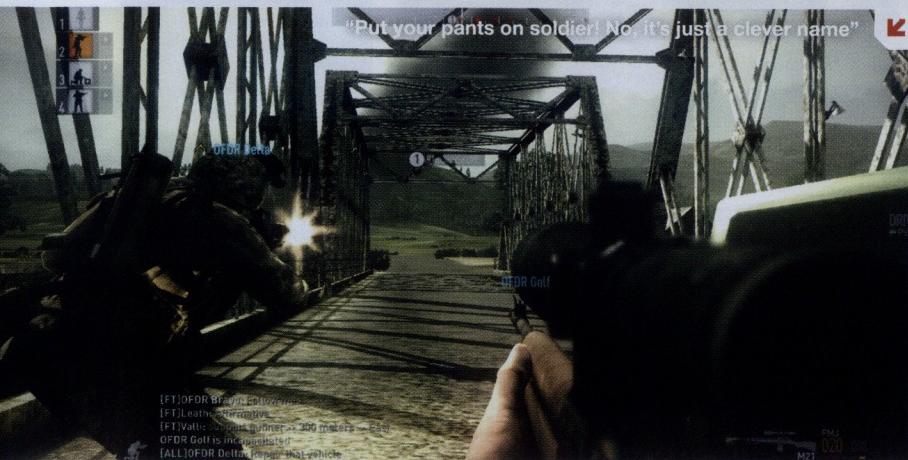
IN REVIEW

Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising



[FT] OFDR Bravo: Microgrid -- 19E 30S
 OFDR Charlie is incapacitated
 [FT] Colangelo: Threat's down

WORSE THAN CALL OF DUTY 4 **BETTER THAN** SOCOM



[FT] OFDR Bravo: Follow me
 [FT] Leathernecks
 [FT] Valt: Shoots Gunner - 300 meters - East
 OFDR Goliath is incapacitated
 [ALL] OFDR Delta: Report that vehicle



"Don't let the sun, go down on me"



OPERATION FLASHPOINT: DRAGON RISING

What is your major malfunction, soldier?

Ever been caught cheating on your partner with their best friend... and their mother? They were still more forgiving than the original *Operation Flashpoint!* Lauded for its awesome simulation of military combat, that technical precision – as in, one bullet kills – also meant it was harder than passing a two-inch kidney stone. For the sequel and the series debut on PS3, developer Codemasters has lengthened the leash a little, but this is still ruthless, military gaming – much to the game's benefit.

The entire experience is set on the fictional (and massive) island of Skira to the north of Japan. Here Chinese and Russian forces are warring over control of its oil and gas reserves and the US marines – led by YOU – have been sent in to take control. As commander of a team of four, the main gameplay loop has you stealthily through massive open countryside to reach targets, masterminding a tactical approach to complete your objective and then physically carrying it out. You have a host of orders which you can give your team-mates – easily accessed via a smart

controller layout – and they'll carry them out pretty effectively, leaving you free to complete the job.

The idea is to make you feel like a marine pulling off covert ops behind enemy lines and *Dragon Rising* succeeds admirably. In part this is due to the military jargon and the realistic weaponry, but it's when you start calling in artillery strikes, make quick escapes on hijacked vehicles and understand the importance of natural cover that you really start to feel the game's vibe. It's still pretty ruthless. If you get caught in the open – which happens a lot in an open-world – you'll get cut to mince in seconds, and even wounds need to be bandaged lest you bleed out. Plus, any overt ruckus will see the AI swarm on your position. It's quite surreal hiding up on a rocky outcrop and watching the enemy snake through the forests looking for you.

Also worthy of several respectful nods is Codemasters EGO engine, best known from the *Colin McRae* games. Its ability to create detailed and expansive environments is impressive, but it's the subtle things that make the experience. The effects of the weather (like mist in low-lying gullies which obscures you from sight), the raw sound effects of the conflict, the impact of a good shot. The AI is also savvy and will run for cover, twitch on the ground when wounded and

looking for help, fan out to search for you and flank to boot. Together they turn a potentially ponderous experience into an impacting one.

Admittedly, the game hits its purple patch in co-op, but no split-screen is a shame. It joins the lack of cut-scenes and some occasionally sparse checkpoints as the game's weaker points. But for those with the patience and the militaristic know-how this will prove a rewarding distraction from the latest alien invasion.

– Chris Stead

FINAL SAY:

- Authentic experience
- EGO engine impresses
- No split-screen co-op
- Niche gaming

VERDICT: Minute attention to detail proves that slow and precise can still mean tense and exciting.

8

INTERMISSION

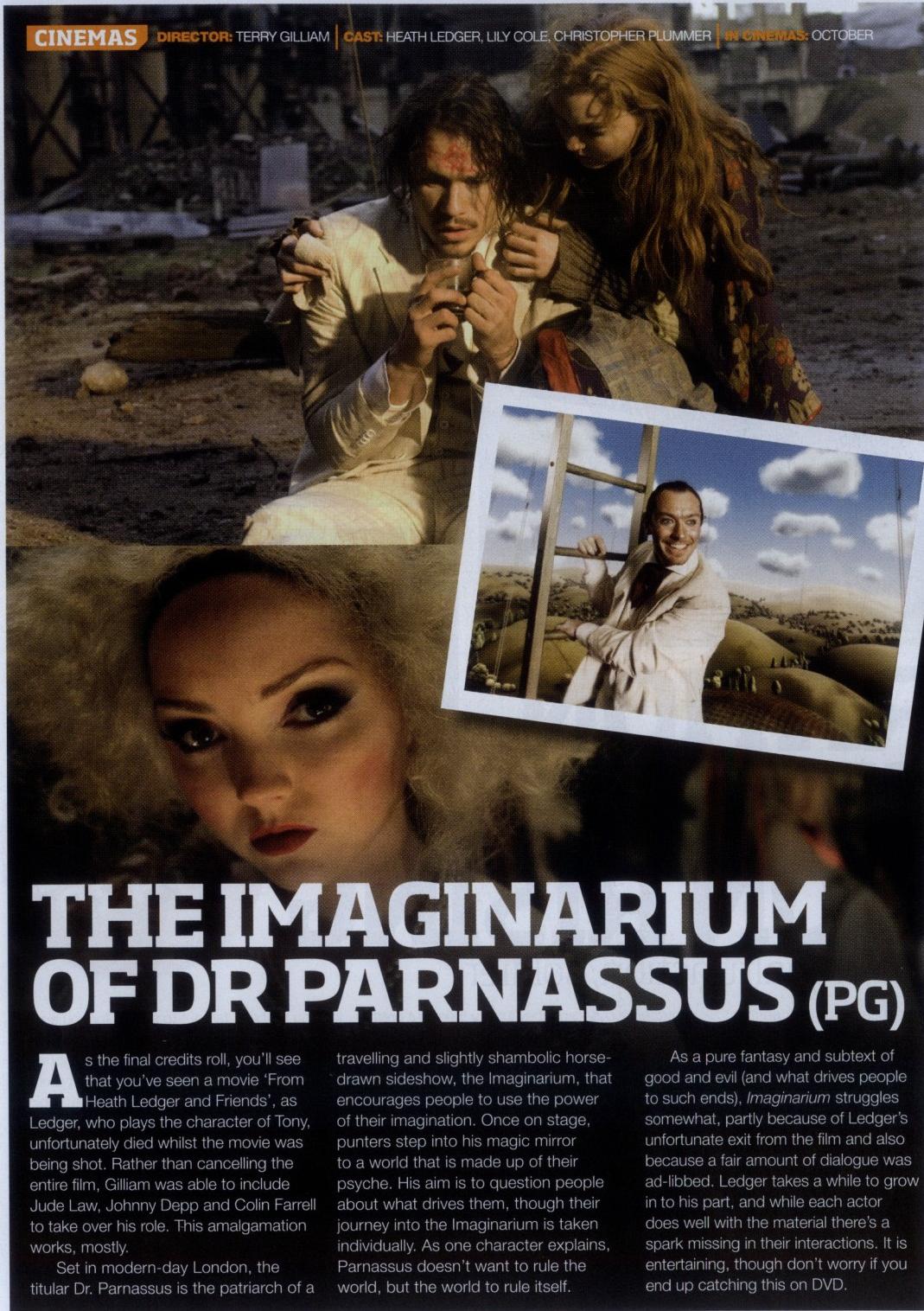
On the screen

CINEMAS

DIRECTOR: TERRY GILLIAM

CAST: HEATH LEDGER, LILY COLE, CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER

IN CINEMAS: OCTOBER



THE IMAGINARIUM OF DR PARNASSUS (PG)

As the final credits roll, you'll see that you've seen a movie 'From Heath Ledger and Friends', as Ledger, who plays the character of Tony, unfortunately died whilst the movie was being shot. Rather than cancelling the entire film, Gilliam was able to include Jude Law, Johnny Depp and Colin Farrell to take over his role. This amalgamation works, mostly.

Set in modern-day London, the titular Dr. Parnassus is the patriarch of a

travelling and slightly shambolic horse-drawn sideshow, the Imaginarium, that encourages people to use the power of their imagination. Once on stage, punters step into his magic mirror to a world that is made up of their psyche. His aim is to question people about what drives them, though their journey into the Imaginarium is taken individually. As one character explains, Parnassus doesn't want to rule the world, but the world to rule itself.

As a pure fantasy and subtext of good and evil (and what drives people to such ends), *Imaginarium* struggles somewhat, partly because of Ledger's unfortunate exit from the film and also because a fair amount of dialogue was ad-libbed. Ledger takes a while to grow in to his part, and while each actor does well with the material there's a spark missing in their interactions. It is entertaining, though don't worry if you end up catching this on DVD.

THE BUZZ

What's really going on behind-the-scenes

Sometimes filmmakers just latch on to a trend and don't let go, either spurred by a novel's success, or TV shows of a similar theme. Sometimes all three just go hand in hand, and vampire films and shows have enjoyed a respectable run in popular culture of late.

While the original *Twilight* hit the silver screen in 2008, based on a novel of the same name, its sequel *New Moon* is out later this year, and Megan Fox stars in lusty flick *Jennifer's Body*. Teen drama *The Vampire Diaries* has hit the box, while the award-winning

True Blood (by the same bloke who created *Six Feet Under*) will soon begin shooting its third season. *Moonlight*, however, tanked after one season.

Whether the other vamps have as much 'bite' as *Buffy* and *Angel* is yet to be determined.

ALSO IN CINEMAS...

Astro Boy (PG)

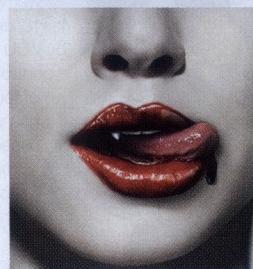
Director: David Bowers
Cast: Freddie Highmore, Kristen Bell, Nicholas Cage, Donald Sutherland

Using Astro Boy's character models, and very little else, this is a "reimagining" of the worst kind. All the angst and intriguing conflict between the robotic brothers Astro and Atlas from the original series has been swept aside for this dumbed down kidified version. With so many high caliber Hollywood players we were surprised at the lack of emotional depth, as each seemed to sleepwalk through their lines. The worst offender: Nic Cage (of course). The only shining light was young Freddie Highmore who brought some much-needed sensitivity to his character Astro, and was by far the standout of the film.

Jennifer's Body (MA15+)

Director: Karyn Kusama
Cast: Megan Fox, Amanda Seyfried, Adam Brody

The horror film with a twisted sense of humour, Fox is the girl the other girls want to be friends with and all the boys would kill for. Now, with demonic urges, she turns to all the guys who never had a chance with her, killing them in the process. With colourful dialogue but awkward structure and execution, it doesn't blend comedy and horror well at all.

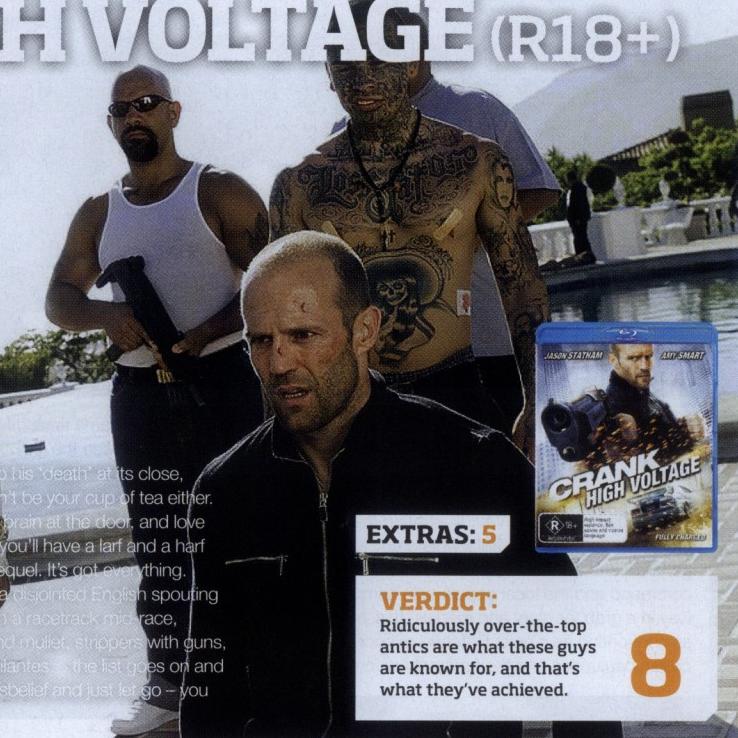
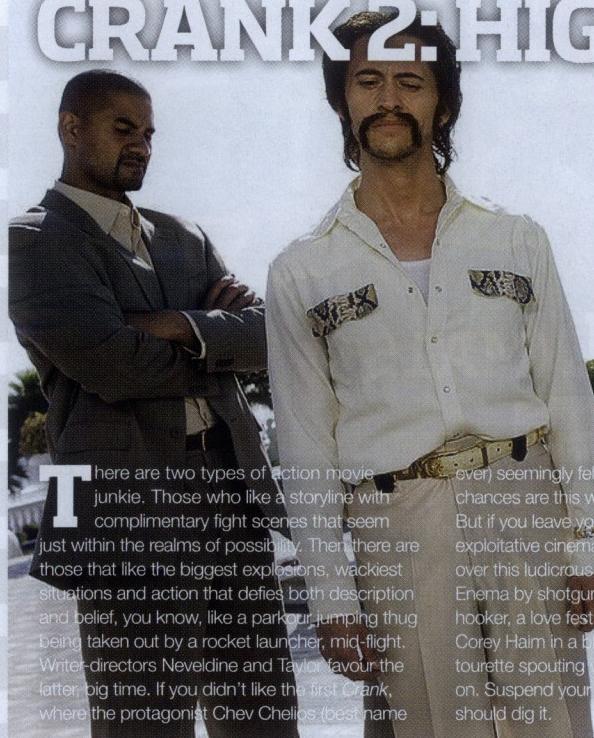


BLU-RAY

DIRECTOR: MARK NEVELDINE, BRIAN TAYLOR |

CAST: JASON STATHAM, AMY SMART, DWIGHT YOAKAM, CLIFTON COLLINS JNR, BAI LING, COREY HAIM

CRANK 2: HIGH VOLTAGE (R18+)



There are two types of action movie junkie. Those who like a storyline with complimentary fight scenes that seem just within the realms of possibility. Then there are those that like the biggest explosions, wackiest situations and action that defies both description and belief, you know, like a parkour jumping thug being taken out by a rocket launcher, mid-flight. Writer-directors Neveldine and Taylor favour the latter, big time. If you didn't like the first *Crank*, where the protagonist Chev Chelios (best name

ever) seemingly fell to his 'death' at its close, chances are this won't be your cup of tea either. But if you leave your brain at the door, and love exploitative cinema, you'll have a larf and a harf over this ludicrous sequel. It's not everything. Enema by shotgun, a disoriented English spouting hooker, a love fest on a racetrack mid-race, Corey Haim in a blond mullet, strippers with guns, tourette spouting vigilantes... the list goes on and on. Suspend your disbelief and just f*** go – you should dig it.

EXTRAS: 5**VERDICT:**

Ridiculously over-the-top antics are what these guys are known for, and that's what they've achieved.

8

BRUNO (R18+)

Director: Larry Charles
Cast: Sacha Baron Cohen

There's no middle ground with Bruno Gehard, the outrageously flamboyant Austrian fashion reporter. As with Ali G and Borat, you either love him or hate him. There are some inspired moments where Bruno sticks it to the US, like his claim of securing his adopted child in exchange for a limited-edition U2 iPod, or confusing hummus with Hamas when talking to an ex-Mossad agent, yet sometimes he takes it too far. As with the end of *Borat*, Bruno also pushes the envelope, like during "Straight Dave's Man Slammmin' Maxout" where he reignites his love with Lutz and lets it manifest itself physically to the shocked and chagrined onlookers. Those with weak constitutions would best avoid, those with the most perverse sense of humour may well have found their Mecca.

**EXTRAS: 6**

VERDICT:
More wit and less shock value next time, please.

6

TRANSFORMERS: REVENGE OF THE FALLEN (M)

Director: Michael Bay
Cast: Shia LaBeouf, Megan Fox, John Turturro, Josh Duhamel, Isabel Lucas

Without a doubt, the CGI in this sequel will leave you amazed, but most of the human stars phone their performances in, leaving the flick horribly unbalanced. To counteract this, there's some trying attempts by two pathetically unfunny 'street' Autobots, who are about as enjoyable as an ice pick to the crotch. The huge droid death matches are still beyond spectacular, but with an overly long run-time and a premature climax this falls off the rails, fast.

**EXTRAS: 6**

VERDICT:
The humans spoil the film in this robot-filled world.

5

PULP FICTION (R18+)

Director: Quentin Tarantino
Cast: John Travolta, Uma Thurman, Sam Jackson, Bruce Willis, Ving Rhames, Tim Roth, Harvey Keitel

Along with *Reservoir Dogs*, *Pulp Fiction* is renowned as Tarantino's best effort and single handedly reinvigorated John Travolta's career. With *Inglourious Basterds* in cinemas now there couldn't be a better time to revisit this all time classic. The lives of two indiscriminate hit men, their nut-buster of a boss and his wife, a boxer on the decline and a few stick-up merchants all intertwine in this masterfully woven flick. With biting dialogue, gratuitous violence, drug abuse, some soft shoe shuffles and even a little male on male bondage thrown into the mix, *Pulp Fiction* is easily one of the best films of the '90s and extremely watchable.

**EXTRAS: 8**

VERDICT:
Bring out the gimp!

10

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Bad Boys 2
Explosions! Babes!

INTERMISSION

On the box

DVD

DIRECTOR: SUSANNA WHITE, SIMON CELLAN

CAST: ALEXANDER SKARSGÅRD, JAMES RANSOME, LEE TERGESSEN, JON HUERTAS, STARK SANDS, BILLY LUSH, RUDY REYES



GENERATION KILL (MA15+)

Based on the true account by *Rolling Stone* journalist Evan Wright, it details his journey with the First Marine Recon Division as the tip of the spear on their road to Baghdad in the Gulf War. Illustrating the gross ineptitude of the military hierarchy as generals and lieutenants put men under their command and the local populace in harm's way in a grab for glory and medals, this is as confronting as it gets. Botched missions, civilian causalities and the futility of war are all

on display, yet at the same time, its strangely heroic and uplifting to see the grunts pull together, watch each other's six, keeping their squad-mates' minds and spirits intact in the face of overwhelming odds, incompetent command, questionable weaponry and depleting rations. We have to mention all around legend Rudy Reyes, who was cast to play himself in the series as the directors were at a loss to find anyone to embody the metrosexual, Buddhist-spouting warrior.

GENERATION KILL



FROM THE CREATOR OF THE WIRE
COMES THE NEW FACE OF AMERICAN WAR

MA 15+ Strong violence, sexual references, some language, brief profanity

3 DISCS

EXTRAS: 5

VERDICT:

On par with *Band of Brothers* as one of the most riveting portrayals of war ever produced. A must-see.

10

HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER SEASON 4 (M)

Director: Various

Cast: Josh Radnor, Jason Segel, Cobie Smulders, Neil Patrick Harris, Alyson Hannigan, Bob Saget

After a slowish start, this is where the show really began to find its feet. Ted proposes to Stella (*Scrubs'* Sarah Chalke) and is left at the altar and Robin moves to take an anchor position in Japan leaving Barney to deal with his unrequited feeling for her, both having a ripple effect throughout the course of the season. Standout episodes all tend to be the ones with *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* star Jason Segel, with our favourite "The Best Burger in New York". Neil Patrick Harris steals every scene as soulless womanizer Barney.



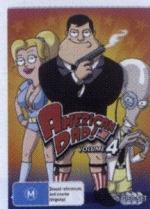
EXTRAS: 6

AMERICAN DAD VOL. 4 (M)

Director: Various

Cast: Seth MacFarlane, Wendy Schaal, Dee Bradley Baker, Scott Grimes, Rachael MacFarlane

Messed up doesn't even begin to describe this more plot-driven cousin to *Family Guy*. From the inspired Bond "Tear-Jerker" opener, to the absolutely brilliant *The Warriors* rip "Escape from Pearl Bailey" right through to the Christmas special finale, the series just seems to get sharper and wronger in equal doses. Son Steve gets dosed by his parents to quell puberty, daughter Hayley falls in love with her father's body double from the CIA, and the CIA run a telethon to buy new torture equipment to facilitate the War on Terror. Nothing is sacred. Seriously messed up, but outrageously funny.



EXTRAS: 4

TOP GEAR THE CHALLENGES 3 (PG)

Director: Various

Cast: Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond, James May

We just can't get enough of these guys' antics, and the "Challenges" are simply the icing on the cake. See the boys go through Hell, high water and Japan in this new list of things never to be attempted by the common man, yet appeal to the rev-head in us all. Watch as they race a bullet train across Japan in a GT-R, set up a gravel circuit bus race, put a Renault R25 Formula One through its paces, see exactly what a £5000 lorry gets you, stand firm on the longevity of British Leyland and confirm their "petrol-head" status by purchasing an Alfa Romeo to add to their respective collections. Expect Clarkson to whine, moan and cheat mercilessly.



EXTRAS: 5

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
Band of Brothers

Camaraderie at its finest

VERDICT:

This season is legend—wait for it... here it comes...

8

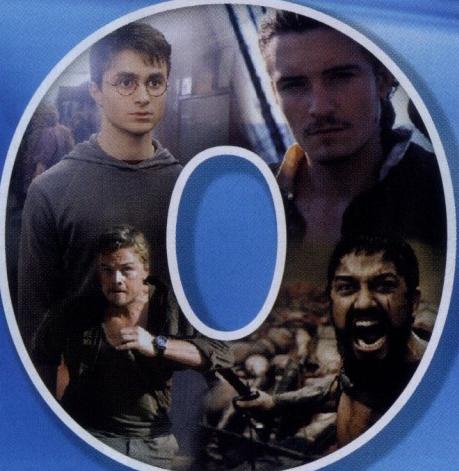
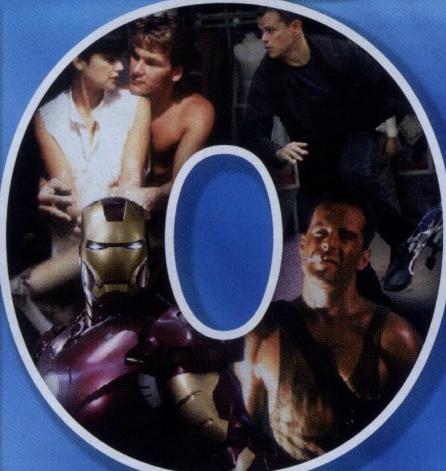
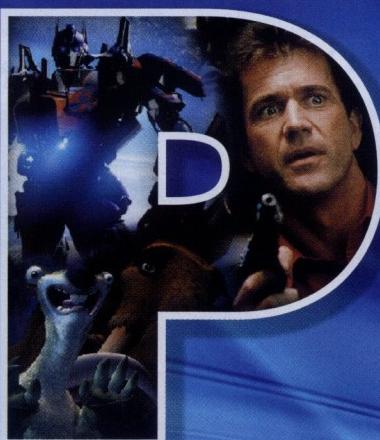
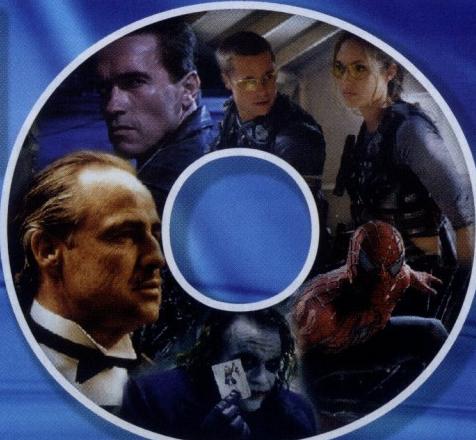
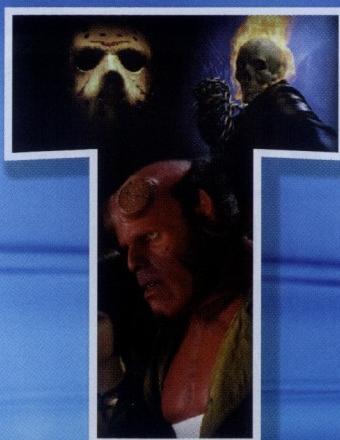
VERDICT:
Essential for fans of comedy with bite.

9

VERDICT:
A perfect balance of pure genius, guts and insanity.

8

ESSENTIAL READING FOR BLU-RAY COLLECTORS



Blu-ray™

A DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO
THE BEST OF BLU-RAY

THRILLER • SCI-FI • ACTION • SUPERNATURAL • COMEDY
DRAMA • KIDS • ROMANCE • ANIMATION



ON SALE NOW!

INTERNET

Gaming, trailers, downloads, friends...

LATEST

Download this...

Brütal Legend demo



Instructions for use: turn to page 624 for our review, log on to PSN, acquire, and play. Rocker Riggs is guaranteed to please.

SHIFT demo



Scoring a solid nine last issue, the series hasn't just taken a new direction, it's also gunning for pole position.

Army of Two The 40th Day trailer



This is a gag fest, as Rico and Salem from EA's latest action game skylark in the office and give a photocopier what it deserves.

Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 demo



This may just be the hardest thing you'll play all decade. Take control of Ryu and Ayane over two levels.

Batman Prey in the Darkness Map Pack



Arkham Asylum is the game that keeps on giving, with another free map pack where you battle goons. For free!

NEWS

IT'S ALL GONE BACKWARDS

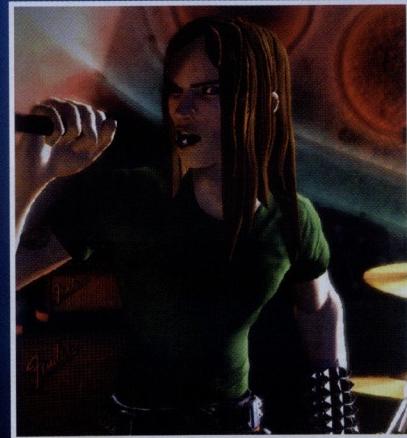
Backwards compatible fans, ready your wallets. Allegedly

Allegedly, as a leaked document of meeting notes details plans between Sega and Sony Computer Entertainment of America (SCEA) to distribute "DC" (Dreamcast, we suspect) games on the PSN, as well as a PS2 emulator for PS3, was uploaded to SEGA's public FTP. Whether it was put there by a Sega employee or an enthusiastic hacker, we're unsure. The document has since been removed, but not before we took a peak at its contents.

Highlights from the notes include "SCEA wants to sell all PS2 titles on PSN (GTA Vice City/Sonic/etc.)" and "If we Sega provide a list of DC titles SCEA will let us know which ones they're interested in having exclusively." From the notes, it looks



like an emulator that would work for all PS2 games won't be available; rather, games will be sold individually. It makes perfect business sense, though we suspect there will be a number of fans who would prefer to play their entire catalogue of PS2 games immediately.



PSP MINIS

Minis are go! The first bunch of tiny-sized, tiny-priced games are up with more to come. All are a bandwidth-friendly 100MB or less in size, and include alien shooter *Alien Havoc* from Sega, block breaking classic *Tetris*, *Pac Man Championship Edition* (which, if it's like its 360 counterpart will be completely awesome), *Hero of Sparta*, and a dozen or so more. Expect to pay no more than \$10 a title.



ROCK BAND UPDATE

Barely four weeks go by without a RB update. A good thing too, as we love it, and reckon you do too. Our picks for the last bunch of updates would have to be Pearl Jam's album *Backspacer*, the Tenacious D tracks, Queen, Flight Of The Conchords and, for flavour of the month, Anvil.

Guitar Hero 5 fans, Wolfmother have a three pack available with 'Pilgrim', 'California Queen' and 'Cosmic Egg'.



ONLINE REVIEWS

TRINE

A thief, a wizard, a knight. Oh my...



The PSN is proving to be a solid platform for indie games with punch; titles that, due to their relatively low budget and lack of blockbuster status, wouldn't quite make it into gamers' homes if they were let loose in the land of retail, but are still worth playing as they're packed with soul, character and a tonne of gameplay. *Trine* is one of those games.

If you ever played the SNES and Megadrive game *Three Vikings* you'll see some similarities in this platformer. Taking control of three characters – a thief, wizard and knight – each with different skills, your goal is to make it from one side of the screen to the other, using the strengths and abilities of each character in the trio to your advantage. The thief's bow and arrow can knock off enemies, and can snag onto objects as a grappling hook. The wizard, whilst rubbish at combat, is able to move objects about the 2D landscape with magic and conjure others into existence. Finally, the knight is the brawler, wielding his sword in order to smack enemies and destroy brittle objects. He also balances out the thief's ranged attacks nicely with strong melee moves, and also possesses a shield.

You're only ever controlling one character at a time, but all three are used to conquer the environment. As the wizard, you might conjure a swing block for the thief to jump or grapple onto, or even decide to cross a seemingly impenetrable gap using one character or the other. The world is filled



with puzzles and enemies, all tied together with some fairly robust physics. Objects move as you'd expect them to, and their manipulation is critical to your success (such as activating a switch or plate).

Trine also shares similarities to *LittleBigPlanet*, as it's possible to have three players at once playing the game. This does change the dynamic somewhat, but can be quite rewarding if you do work together. That's a pretty big 'if'. Like *LBP*, *Trine* invokes curiosity when solving puzzle; there are generally multiple ways to get past a problem so experimentation is encouraged. The characters do have their own health meters, so if one is KO'd they're out of action until the next checkpoint. There are also role-playing elements here, as characters can collect vials to increase their abilities.

It's also super pretty; polished graphics with nice animation and flourishes add to the whole experience. Sure, it might not take you that long to run through and the amount of skeletons you'll take to pieces might rack up like a Geiger counter, but this is a charming game. **Paul Taylor**



WORSE THAN **LTTE** BETTER THAN **GAUNTLET II**



CREATIVE CONTROL

Sure, you could just blitz through the game on a fiendish speed run, but it pays to take your time and think creatively in *Trine* if you want to nab every single collectible. There are often times where you'll be juggling all three characters – creating surfaces with the wizard, grappling with the thief and smashing nasties – to grab a well-earned bonus item.

FINAL SAY:

- Tricky puzzles
- Graphically competent
- Could be longer
- Repetitive enemies

VERDICT: Bring your thinking hats when you turn this on and you'll have a blast. Surprisingly deep.

8

INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ASCARON
DEVELOPER: FROZENBYTE
PLAYERS: 1-3
PRICE: \$29.95

Tips and cheats

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BATTLEFIELD 1943

It's the best-selling PSN game in the world. It's also one of the best. Here are some tips for green recruits looking to make their mark in the Pacific Theatre!

LEARN 2 PLAY

Call us crazy, but we're going to assume you already have a passing familiarity with shooters and online multiplayer games. Things like constantly moving, keeping your weapons reloaded and trash talking noobs should be common sense.

WENDY I CAN FLY!

Take the time to earn your pilot wings in the tutorial before attempting an Immelman turn in the heat of combat. It's not easy, and requires a bit of practice and patience before you can track and kill enemies of the airborne persuasion.

HOLD THE FORT

Time and again we've seen ad hoc squads rush a flag and hang around just long enough to capture it before running off to the next hot spot. It's great fun for kids with ADD but it's not much cop when it comes to winning a battle. The gun-and-run approach means a constant turnover of flags and that's not particularly useful for anybody.

Always try to leave a live body or two at each control point. While they will be unlikely to survive a full-on attack, they should be in a good position to spot stray opponents and gun them down before they launch a sneak attack on the flag.



KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN

Empty vehicles show up on the minimap, so make sure to keep an eye out for sudden spawns near your base – chances are there's a squad of heavily armed baddies gunning for your flag. Knowing where they're coming from ruins the element of surprise and gives you time to get into a better position to hold them off until support arrives.

REPAIR VEHICLES

Infantry can fix vehicles, which improves longevity and scores them points. Knowing when to hop out for a quick spot of roadside maintenance can result in a match-long campaign of terror that will rocket you to the top of the world leaderboards.

SCORE A GOOD GUNNER

Aside from keeping your vehicles well maintained a

good gunner/driver combo is nigh on unstoppable. Good communication helps put no end to your massacre and with two pairs of eyes playing spotter to RPG-wielding kamikaze attacks or low-flying planes, it will take some serious co-ordination from the other team to take you down for good.

PLAY DIRTY

We don't advocate cheating as a general rule, but

steaming in with a car bomb is a guilty pleasure of ours. Team up with a buddy and spawn as an Infantryman and a Scout. Get your Scout pal to load a jeep up with charges, and then head straight for an enemy stronghold or tank. Once you're in detonation range, tell your Scout to pop the charges and laugh a gleeful laugh as the friendly fire rules stop you or your car from taking any damage while the world burns around you.

TROPHY HUNTER

Looking for gold silver and bronze in your favourite titles? Here are three to grab in *Katamari Forever*



PHOTOGRAPHER

In the first level after the tutorial you'll find a camera, and pressing a shoulder button gives you the chance to take a photo of your surroundings – perfect for PS3 wallpaper. Go to Katamari's in-game photo album, check out just one snap, and back out. Job done!

7 THINGS TO DO IN... WET

Rubi Malone is more woman than most men can handle, an in-your-face she-devil with a taste for hard liquor and antique pistols. She's got no time for men, unless they're due for a date with the business end of her Katana, and with only one outfit she's not the sort to spend the weekend shopping. So what, exactly, does a girl like Rubi do to unwind?



1 GET THE RAGE

Sometimes, being a total bad-ass just isn't enough. For those special moments, rage mode is just the ticket. Seeing red, Rubi sets to work on any sucker foolish enough to get in her way with the righteous fury of a woman scorned. Just be thankful you're not on the, painful, receiving end.



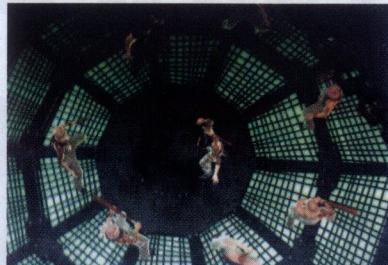
2 TAKE A DIVE WITHOUT A PADDLE...

Okay, so a paddle wouldn't really help here, but when it comes to returning stolen antiques, time is of the essence – no time to land, and no time to pick up a 'chute. You'd be amazed at what's lying around in old airplanes at 30,000 feet.



STARDUST

Sometimes best-laid plans just don't work out. Head back into a level, finish it, and you're given the opportunity to turn make your most recent katamari immortal – Star – or forgettable – Stardust. Pick the latter and your efforts are zapped. It takes time, but have a trophy for your trouble.



3 BEAT OFF SEVEN MEN AT ONCE

Dancing with strangers can be fun, just so long as you're careful. Make sure you don't lose sight of your friends and if you become separated, and find yourself in a threatening situation it's time to start cracking skulls. It might not be ladylike, but it sure is effective.



4 BE A PARTY POOPER

"If you're name's not down, you're not coming in." How many times have we heard that? In Rat Boy's party house it seems the only people invited are angry bouncers. Thanks to our friendly neighbourhood gatling gun, such unnecessary attitude is a thing of the past.



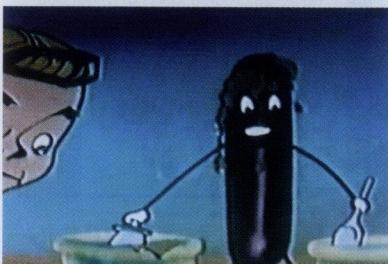
5 GET AN AMAZING HEAD RUSH

Climbing ladders sucks. Sliding down ladders popping caps in sucker MCs on the other hand, does not. Whack four or more baddies in one epic descent to score an "amazing head rush" and become a certified death dealer. Note: Not to be confused with a brain freeze.



6 GO SURFING

Car chases are so passé. Any fool can hop behind the wheel of a car and hunt down their prey. It takes real balls to use rush hour traffic as stepping stones to your goal, and if there's one thing our girl has in spades it's massive, pendulous balls. Not literally, of course, that would be weird.



7 TAKE A BREAK

Rubi's adventures are funded by her local place of worship, horror movies, the snack bar and an off-season Mr. Hanky. Apparently, the Christmas poo likes to spend his down-time smearing himself in special sauce and hiding in the mouths of children. One for *Media Watch*, perhaps?



MOVIE FAN

Another one earned by just looking at the options. Get through the first few levels, and after the first RoboMen and Queen cartoon have cropped up, head back to the options screen, watch it five times in a row (it doesn't matter what order or page) and wait for the chime.

INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

WANTED

My precious...



BRINK

You'd be forgiven for thinking there's a surfeit of shooters clogging up the release schedule, however this latches onto the thing that makes a shooter ever so much better: co-op. Eight player co-op to be more exact, as you all work to save a Utopian city-in-a-bubble called 'The Ark' from overpopulation-fuelled civil war.



CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW

What do you get when you bring Hideo Kojima, Patrick Stewart, Robert Carlyle and one of the best-loved franchises around together? We don't know yet, but this reboot will have goblins grabbing their chain whips to beat down the doors of Konami if it isn't 52 shades of awesomeness.



MODNATION RACERS

Karting goes next-gen in what could be described as *Super Sackboy Kart* if we were really bloody lazy. We're not, so we can tell you that this racer will have mucho customisation – we're talking characters, karts and entire race tracks, much like *LittleBigPlanet*. Looks rad.



POSSESSION

You're a zombie that possesses brains rather than eating them, controlling a zombie army ranging from your standard shamblers through to 'blowers', against an evil chemical company that caused this whole mess. Sounds ace? Hell yeah, although it still seems to be struggling to find a publisher.



RAGE

It isn't a game about music videos. Rather this is a combination shooter meets racer set in one of those post-apocalyptic worlds that always makes us want to watch the second Mad Max flick again. It's been coming longer than a bull in a dairy farm, but with regular updates still seeping out, it now looks a goer for 2010.



YAKUZA 4

Whilst we Westerners are stuck in a seeming endless loop imploring Sega for an English version of *Yakuza* 3, Sega has done gone and announced a fourth instalment for Japan. Jealous, us? Yes, especially when it's promising features we've wanted to include since the series' inception. Time for us all to learn Japanese?

SIMPLY THE BEST...

The best of the best of the best of the best

ADVENTURE



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"GTAIV is a game 10 out of 10 was designed for – a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime you'll tell your grandkids about it."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North PUBLISHER: Rockstar PLAYERS: 1-16

10



UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

"The only bad thing about it is it ends, but hot damn it takes you on a transcendently enjoyable ride. There's no reason why you shouldn't buy this game."

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1

10



LITTLE BIGPLANET

"By rejigging the traditional platformer with physics and an accessible level creator, *LittleBigPlanet* becomes something delightfully simple and postmodern – a game that everyone can play, and endlessly recreate."

DEVELOPER: Media Molecule
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-4

10



DEAD SPACE

"The best survival horror title this generation – by an absolute country mile. *Dead Space* combines a smart story with incredible visuals, sound design to create what is arguably the scariest video game ever made. A must-play on every possible level."

DEVELOPER: Visceral Games
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1

9



RED FACTION GUERRILLA

"Turning destruction into an art form, *Red Faction Guerrilla* is a sandbox experience of the highest calibre. A credible physics package creates loads of 'must see' moments, making this a game you didn't even know you wanted."

DEVELOPER: Volition
PUBLISHER: THQ
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

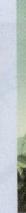


INFAMOUS

"The city you explore, the game mechanics, the story, presentation, music and interface all conspire to play silly buggers with your perceptions of what video gaming is all about. Good for at least two playthroughs, the choice to use your superpowers for good or evil is, literally, in your hands."

DEVELOPER: Sucker Punch
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1

9



MGS4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

"An incredibly layered gaming experience that is almost inexhaustible. One of the best games available on the PlayStation 3, and definitely one of the top exclusives. Buy and play this videogame now."

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



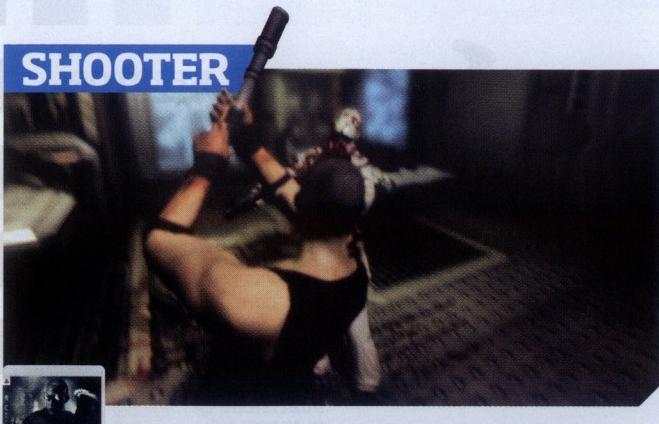
FALLOUT 3

"Taking the solid base of *Oblivion* and placing into a post apocalyptic wasteland always sounded like a great idea – and *Fallout 3* proves that concept brilliantly. This is a game that will astound you with the sheer depth and enormity of its incredible vision."

DEVELOPER: Bethesda
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1

9

SHOOTER



THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

"Worth your sweat. The combination of two campaigns equals a respectable 20+ hours of gameplay. A must for those wanting something moody and fresh."

DEVELOPER: Starbreeze Studios PUBLISHER: Atari PLAYERS: 1-12

8



KILLZONE 2

"Visually Killzone 2 runs through the competition like a bull in the proverbial china shop. Lucky then, that the game's design and story matches the lofty production values. Killzone 2 is the first-person shooter evolved."

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-16

10



BIOSHOCK

"As a sub-par port, minus the promised extra content, BioShock is a disappointment. BUT you'd be silly to miss out on what is undoubtedly one of the landmark games of this generation so far. In many ways, this is a must play."

DEVELOPER: 2K Marin PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1

8



CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

"A fantastic shooter with a dizzying array of combat scenarios and packed with bleeding-edge military hardware. COD4 is one of the tightest shooters we've ever played."

DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-16

10

WARHAWK



"Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night and smoother than a glass of Guinness, Warhawk is a seriously superior piece of software. Multiplayer only, but you'd be barking mad to miss it."

DEVELOPER: Incognito PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-32

9

THE ORANGE BOX

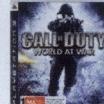


"The Orange Box is ripe in season, and packed with vitamin value. With five quality titles, including the sublime *Portal*, there truly is something here for everybody. An unmissable package."

DEVELOPER: Valve PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-16

9

CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR



"Superior in many ways to even *Modern Warfare*, this is a surprisingly superlative piece of software. Powerful, well-produced, stuffed with violence – it's fantastic. The action is relentless, the visuals buttery-smooth, the intensity savage – we love it."

DEVELOPER: Treyarch PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-16

10

GHOST-BUSTERS



"Well-honed and accessible controls, some spectacular visual effects, excellent pace, great level design, incredible attention to detail – all of these essential traits combined with the *Ghostbusters* universe and come together for a thoroughly addictive experience."

DEVELOPER: Terminal Reality PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-4

9

FAR CRY 2



"At times overstretching itself, *Far Cry 2*'s breath-taking ambition can often be its undoing, but it's still one of the best shooters out there. Plus, setting stuff on fire is still a ridiculous amount of fun."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal PUBLISHER: Ubisoft PLAYERS: 1-16

8

TOP 5

SPECIAL EDITION PSP



DARTH VADER

Despite Lord Vader's head looking like it was cobbled together in two seconds in Photoshop, we love the cheek of putting him on a white PSP rather than a black one.



GOD OF WAR

What better way to give anybody even thinking of interrupting you whilst playing the evil eye than with Kratos staring them down? The redness just adds to the aceness.



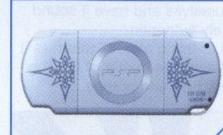
MONSTER HUNTER

If you were lucky enough to get your mitts on one of these limited-time-only treasures then you won't need us to tell you that it's golden and it's gorgeous.



THE SIMPSONS

All right, bereft as it is of any actual *Simpsons* markings some may label this lame, but if you want to 'be seen, be safe' whilst gaming then this baby sure has you covered!



STAR OCEAN

Even if you're not one that digs upon the role-playing magnitude of *Star Ocean*, you have to admit that this 'Felicia Blue' PSP really looks all nice and party-like.

INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

MAGIC MOMENTS



GAME: The Beatles: Rock Band
CONSOLE: PS3
YEAR: 2009

THE MOMENT:

If there's one absolutely iconic chord in the history of music, it's the utterly glorious 'THRUN!' at the beginning of 'The Beatles' 'A Hard Day's Night'.

As any fan of the Fab Four who's ever picked up a guitar will likely tell you, it's usually the first thing you'll try to play by them. It's also the first thing you'll fail at, resulting in a mettle test – are you hard enough to persevere until your fingers melt, or are you going to do the 'generation meh' thing and skulk off to simpler pastures?

Mind you, there's a very good reason why that chord is impossible to nail correctly. Not only was George Harrison, the lead conspirator of the chord, playing a 12-string guitar, but John Lennon and Paul McCartney were also strumming their particular guitar and bass. Mere mortals like you and us have had about as much chance of hitting that chord as Stevie Wonder has of belting out The Who's 'I Can See for Miles' without people giggling.

But the 'conspiracy' doesn't end there. There's still something else in THAT chord which has confounded everybody since it was created within the walls of Abbey Road Studios in 1964. With several different interpretations of the chord existing in sheet music, many wondered if it would ever be nailed definitively, especially as those responsible never felt the urge to dish.

It actually took a mathematician, rather than a musician, to finally solve the riddle. Not only does this chord of doom incorporate strums from George, John and Paul, there's also a collection of five piano notes from that sneaky boffin George Martin!

For rabid fans of The Beatles the wait for their particular brand of Rock Band was interminable. But come number nine... number nine... number nine... (that's 09/09/09 to non-acolytes), we finally had our chance. We could now play that hallowed, much-discussed chord ourselves and have it sound completely authentic.

And to think, after all that fuss it was just a simple matter of holding down red, blue and orange...



RACING



PURE

"Pure shot straight from nowhere to rub *MotorStorm*'s face in its glorious graphics and watertight gameplay. It's not as varied as its main competitor, but damn does it play well."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock **PUBLISHER:** Funtastic **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



GRAN TURISMO 5: PROLOGUE

"An anemic game package that somehow survives by being what is quite possibly the greatest example of audio-visual excellence on the PlayStation 3 thus far. Well worth checking out."

DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



SEGA RALLY

"To appreciate *Sega Rally* you'll have to continually remind yourself that it's a deceptively life-like caricature of a hardcore rallying experience. Not brain surgery, but it delivers the fun in big muddy spades."

DEVELOPER: Sega Driving Studio
PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1-6

9



COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

"*DiRT 2* is snazzy, but it's too boneheaded for its own good, has few real rally cars and very little proper rallying. The original *DiRT* remains a far better example of a next gen rally game. More varied and far less US-centric."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1-16

9



RACE DRIVER: GRID

"This bastard rock n' roll son of *V8 Supercars* and *Colin McRae: DiRT* is hot. Your lower jaw will relax. Your eyelids will take five. And you'll start to drool. Shame it ditched its roots though, and the V8 DLC Codies promised has vanished."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1-12

9



NEED FOR SPEED SHIFT

"*Shift* bucks the trend of all-American games, and treats you as an intelligent racer. Whether you want to get under the bonnet and tinker, or even just race with what you're given, this truly is a must-have package. It's also damn pretty and very, very noisy."

DEVELOPER: Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



MOTORSTORM

"In our humble opinion *MotorStorm* was the best launch title on the fledgling PS3 – and arguably it's one of the greatest launch titles of all time. Defining next-gen racing as a platform upon which smart AI and terrain deformation could thrive, *MotorStorm* reinvented the arcade racer."

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10

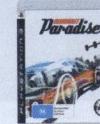


MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

"Within its niche sub-genre, *MC: LA* reigns supreme. Well designed, rolling objectives, and an insane amount of customisation, *MC: LA* manages to rise above the rabble, easily beating off *Need for Speed Undercover* at its own game."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

7



BURNOUT PARADISE

"You'll lament the thoughtless removal of splitscreen and the lack of a retry button, but you'll marvel at the slick frame rate, the sun drenched city, and Criterion's stellar commitment to free downloadable content. Awesome."

DEVELOPER: Criterion
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

MUSIC & SPORTS



ROCK BAND

"A triumph. Harmonix has found the formula for a truly great music game – immaculate presentation, great tunes and a job for as many of your friends as possible. You wanted the best, you got the best."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix **PUBLISHER:** EA **PLAYERS:** 1-4

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 09

"Golf, for most of the populace, is about as exciting as watching paint dry in an old folk's home, so it's testament to EA that this game actually works well."

DEVELOPER: EA
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

8

SKATE 2

"Despite some frame rate issues, SKATE 2 is undoubtedly one of the greatest sports game's ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense, the balance is sublime. Massively addictive."

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



FIFA 09

"With its new momentum physics, stellar visuals, and engaging gameplay, 2009 is finally the year that the *FIFA* franchise manages to leap the perennial hurdle that is *Pro Evolution Soccer*. Now Konami have to play catch up."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-20

9



NBA 2K9

"Basketball's hardly the national sport of Australia, but that doesn't mean that the game can't be fun. This is a decent representation of Barack Obama's favourite sport. Fans of basketball should check this out."

DEVELOPER: 2K
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
PLAYERS: 1-10

7



VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

"More of a tweak than a brand new experience, *Virtua Tennis 2009* is still the most enjoyable tennis game available today. Along with player creation tools, the biggest plus is the chance to play in the Davis Cup."

DEVELOPER: Sumo
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
PLAYERS: 1-4

10



GUITAR HERO METALLICA

"*Guitar Hero Metallica* improves upon GHWT in a number ways – a more user-friendly HUD, superior presentation and more attention to detail. Great tracklist too, including 'Tuesday's Gone' by Lynyrd Skynyrd."

DEVELOPER: Neversoft
DISTRIBUTOR: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-4

8



SINGSTAR

"Take *SingStar* for what it is: a sublimely developed party game that cruelly exploits drunken girls and deludes them into believing they are 'SingStars'. Perfectly presented, and endlessly fun post-booze-fest. It's no *Rock Band* though."

DEVELOPER: Sony
DISTRIBUTOR: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-4

8

TOP 5

CLASSIC AUSSIE DLC WE WANT TO ROCK OUT TO



THE ANGELS

No way, get effed, eff off? NO! These guys were the kings of riffage – think 'No Secrets', 'Mr Damage' and, of course, the immortal 'Am I Ever Gonna See Your Face Again'.



THE CHURCH

Okay, so Kilbey and co. were hardly balls-out rock animals, but *Rock Band* and *GH* aren't just about decibels. These guys penned many classics – 'Unguarded Moment', anybody?



DIVINYLS

Chrissie Amphlett both inspired us and scared the shit out of us. The undisputed top Aussie rock chick, the guys behind her made an awesome noise – think 'Boys in Town'.



HOODOO GURUS

Aussie rock gods who took the back roads to major popularity, they've never lost their cool and have a catalogue so vast and ace that they could sustain their own game.



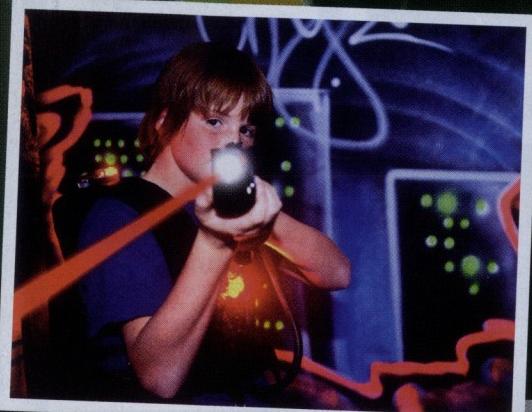
MIDNIGHT OIL

Oooiiiiii! Find us one music game fan that wouldn't leap at the chance to get in touch with their inner slaphead and we'll hit them about the noggin with 10, 9, 8... 'til they bleed!

BEST THE BATTLE BEGGIN'

LASER SKIRMISH

m9.com.au



WIN!
your chance
to take part in
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MODERN WARFARE
2

SYDNEY | MELBOURNE | BRISBANE

M9 Laser Skirmish is an action packed indoor laser adventure game, where players manoeuvre through the shadowy world of the themed battlegrounds. Your mission is to score points and stay alive! Advanced laser weapons and combat vests record direct hits as points whilst you negotiate the battleground avoiding your enemy. For more information on M9 Laser Skirmish visit m9.com.au and m9.co.nz

YOUR CHANCE TO WIN:

We're giving 20 readers in each city (Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne) the chance to bring a friend to battle it out to win great prizes, including a years worth of M9 Laser Skirmish games, a copy of Modern Warfare 2, gaming and DVD prizes, and much more! Plus everyone that plays gets a goodie bag on the day!

Reader events will be in the evening on Wednesday 2nd December 2009 in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Entrants will have the opportunity for a practice battle before commencing the competition. Places are strictly limited!

TO ENTER: Tell us in 25 words or less 'Why you will be the ultimate M9 Laser Skirmish Champion'. Send your entry to: laserskirmish@derwenthoward.com.au. Entries close November 23, 2009 at 5pm. All participants will be contacted by email on November 24, 2009.

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INFAMOUS

Worms Armageddon



1999

“Nothing beats crowding around the telly, boozing up and talking trash”

WORMS ARMAGEDDON

“First blood!”

Are games getting better? Yes. Yes... and no. Graphics and gameplay make great strides every year, yet nowadays publishers have been making a mercenary push to rub out splitscreen multiplayer. Their reasoning: if gamers can only play against others online, then they will be forced to buy more copies. The problem? Gamers really like playing splitscreen multiplayer. Nothing beats crowding around the telly, boozing up, and talking trash.

In the era of the original PlayStation, the late 20th century, this genre reached its zenith with *Worms Armageddon*.

Worms was the ultimate evolution of old-school ‘artillery’ games – like *Scorched Earth* on the PC. You would set the angle and power of your gun turret, try to adjust for wind, and take turns getting your shots closer and closer to the enemy. *Worms* was *Scorched Earth* on crack. Each cartoon unit could move as well as fire, planting landmines, lashing out with melee attacks, uzi’s, miniguns, and even the Holy Hand Grenade from *Monty Python*.

Worms had more surreal weapons than the rest of the PlayStation software library put together. You could unleash a stampede of exploding mad cows, or launch the Super Sheep, a remote-controlled smart-bomb. You could call in a variety of air strikes – carpet bombing would unleash a cascade of exploding

carpets. Yet the deadliest *Worms* weapon of all was treachery. A typical four-man game would see temporary alliances end with the most cutting betrayals. It was gruesome.

It was glorious.

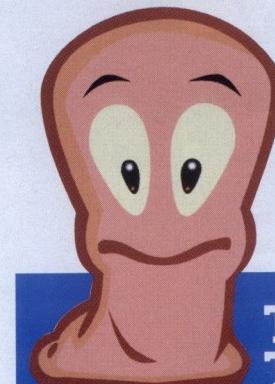
Yet it was not to last. Like a director making his classic films worse with special editions, Team 17 of the early 21st Century seemed to have no idea what made *Worms* so great in the first place. It created *Worms 3D*, which eschewed the crisp simplicity of a 2D plane – it was a pig’s breakfast. It created *Worms Forts: Under Siege*, which spurned the short, sharp match style for sprawling, incomprehensible real-time strategy headaches. Team 17 later went on to make *Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust*, but the writing was already on the wall. They had been weighed, and measured, and found wanting.

What killed the *Worms*? A lack of faith. The decision-makers at Team 17 saw the complete ascendance of 3D as inevitable, and chose to sacrifice their most important play mechanic on the altar of progress. Yet they failed to see that while technology changes, the nature of man does not. For example, we can think of a very, very low tech game that has surged in popularity recently. It lets young men get together, and booze, and backstab each other, and it’s about as 2D as it gets.

It’s called poker. ■ James Cottie



INFO
CONSOLE: PSONE
GENRE: STRATEGY
DEVELOPER: TEAM 17
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UK
CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$15 (EBAY)



TALKING THE TALK

Worms was the creation of Team 17, a UK developer founded in the 16-bit era (Amiga, SNES, Megadrive, etc). Their original name was ‘17-Bit’, for they saw themselves as being that little bit better than everyone else.

AUSTRALIAN
ink

TATTOOS. STYLE. CULTURE.

A close-up, moody photograph of a man's face. He has dark hair, blue eyes, and a beard. His hand is resting against his chin, with his fingers partially hidden by his hair. Several tattoos are visible on his fingers: 'X', 'M', 'N', and a small circular symbol. He is wearing a dark shirt with a white skull pattern.

**ISSUE 2
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NEXT ISSUE

REVIEWED

Assassin's Creed II
Ratchet & Clank Future:
A Crack in Time
Avatar
Rogue Warrior
The Saboteur
Fairytale Fights
LEGO Rock Band
NBA Live 10
NBA 2K10
... and more!



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Strong drug references,
coarse language,
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PlayStation Portable